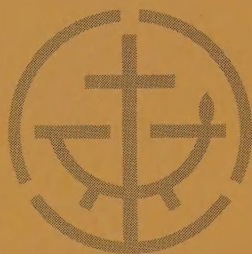


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PAULUS CHRISTIFER,

AND OTHER SERMONS.

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PAULUS CHRISTIFER,

AND OTHER SERMONS,

BY

JOHN KAY, D.D.,

MINISTER OF ARGYLE PLACE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
EDINBURGH.



EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM PATERSON.

1884.

TO
THE REV. WILLIAM HENRY GOOLD, D.D.,
OF MARTYRS' FREE CHURCH, EDINBURGH,
AND
THOMAS BINNIE, ESQ.
OF THE KNOWE, GLASGOW,

THESE DISCOURSES ARE DEDICATED, WITH AFFECTIONATE
REGARD, BY

THE AUTHOR.

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PAULUS CHRISTIFER.

Pity my woes, O God,

And touch my will with Thy warm breath :

Put in my trembling hand Thy rod—

That quickens death.

That my dead faith may feel Thy sun,

And say, "Thy will be done."

W. C. RICHARDS.

2 Cor. iv. 10.—"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

THERE is only One eye that sees, only One mind that is cognisant of the burdens of all men. Our knowledge of these burdens extends only a very little way, and is for the most part confined to what we ourselves bear. Passing along the busy thoroughfares, the thought will, at times, force itself upon us, how few there are of all we meet who have not their burden! With some, the burden connects itself with bereavements which have left their mark deep upon family life; with others, it connects itself with the cares and anxieties of business; with some, the burden that is borne rises out of the ingratitude which has been manifested by those of whom we had hoped better things; with others, it springs from disappointed hopes and frustrated ambitions. It would be in vain to expect

that these burdens should present themselves under any visible or tangible form; and, still, they are none the less real. One, the bright touch of whose genius was quenched all too soon for the love that many bore him—(a fellow-citizen of our own)—gave, in his wonderful etchings prepared for the *Pilgrim's Progress*, the most vivid illustration with which I have ever met of these burdens unseen, yet real, which men bear with them through the world. I refer to the illustrations from the pencil of the late David Scott. In these, till Christian arrives at the cross, there is uniformly presented the burden of sin, not as it is in the common engravings, as substantial as the pilgrim staff which Christian bears, but as a shadowy something through which the outline of the stooping shoulders and the muscles of the back may be visible. With an ordinary artist the form of the body would have been obscured by the burden, but this master has made that which Christian bears about dimly diaphonous, indicating thereby that it has being or existence both for the pilgrim and for the onlooker; though for the latter it has no substance that may be touched or handled. More than eighteen hundred years ago there so-journed in Palestine, now in Asia Minor, again in Greece, and again in Italy, a man who bare such a burden. Sitting at work, with the busy fingers converting the coarse goat-hair cloth into tents, or standing upon Mars Hill, or passing slowly along the highway that leads to Rome, he always bare

about with him a something which the world could not see, but which he himself knew to be there—a burden, something borne, but not, therefore, an oppressive weight. You must not imagine that the case of this man was at all singular, for there were many thousands in his own day, and there have been many millions of men since, who have had the same experience, and who have borne the same burden—"who have borne about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

Let us ask ourselves—1. What the apostle means by this expression, "bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus." 2. What is the practical outcome and result of bearing this burden?

(a) *The consciousness that our sins have formed the occasion of the dying of Jesus is in the Apostle's mind.* I do not say that our sins are the cause of Christ's death. The cause of that greatest of all events in the history of the universe must be looked for in the love, the justice, the holiness of God; and yet, had there been no sin, there had been no necessity for the great sin-offering; had there been no sin, it would not have been necessary that the Son of the Eternal should leave the throne of His glory and sojourn on earth for so many years as a homeless wanderer, to die at last upon the cross of Calvary. So that, in one sense, the dying of Jesus and our sins stand in close relationship the one to the other. It is not till we know and understand this, that the dying of our Lord

assumes in our view any practical bearing. Up to that point, it is either a mere historical fact which does not influence the current of our life, or it is one of those sentimental things which cause, for a little, a feeling of regret, only to be followed by the speedy resumption of the world's pleasures and follies. To those who regard the death of Jesus in the light, merely, of an historical fact, that event associates itself entirely with the Jews who demanded of the Roman power His condemnation. Herod, Pilate, Caiaphas, *they* had mainly to do with His crucifixion, and as the crucifiers and the crucified have alike passed away from earth, why should *we* bear about the dying of Jesus of Nazareth, more than that of some innocent victim who perished under Nero, or Domitian, or Caligula? That, however, is not the point of view from which Paul contemplates it. True, the interval between the dying of Jesus and the writing of this epistle to Corinth was comparatively brief, but this is a case in which years make no difference. To the man that understands these two things—what sin is, and how sin has been atoned for, the lapse of years does not form an element in his bearing about the dying of Jesus. There comes a time for all such, when, with streaming eyes, with countenance on which grief has laid its hand, and amidst sobs of anguish and cries of truest penitence, they say, “the dying of Jesus took place through us. We crucified Him; we, with wicked hands, nailed Him to the

cross. See! there, and there, and there are the wounds we made. We sharpened the spear that pierced His heart. *Our* arm dealt the blow that numbered Him with the dead; *our* guilt sent the iron into His soul." Do you recollect how Simon Barjonas, on the day of Pentecost, brought home to his hearers the dying of Jesus? He did not rest satisfied with saying that Jesus of Nazareth had been put to death, he adds,—“Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified the Prince of life.” From the moment that they realised this, “they bare about with them the dying of Jesus.” They were pricked in their hearts, and said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Observe, that He whom we have slain is our brother; our Elder Brother; one who took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; one who, with amazing love, stooped from the high heaven that He might bless us for evermore. The sword of justice was drawn to smite us. What did that Elder Brother do? Pity us? Yes! and more than pity us. He came between the upraised sword and us, and received its thrust in His own heart.

“The Father lifted up His rod—
O, Christ, it fell on Thee!
Thou wast sore stricken of Thy God,
There’s not one stroke for me.
Thy tears, Thy blood, beneath it flowed,
Thy bruising healeth me.”

It may be asked, “*Is this fact of the dying of*

Christ always consciously present in the heart of the believer?" Are we to understand that the thought of this one fact consciously fills our mind to the exclusion of every other thought? I do not understand Paul to say that it was so with him, nor do I believe it is so with the Christian of the present day. The Apostle says that he "always" bare about with him the dying of Jesus; it was there *potentially*, ever liable to be consciously called into active operation in the battle against sin and temptation. Though we do not *consciously* breathe, the inspiration and the expiration of the atmosphere into, and from the lungs goes on. So, though the mind may not be constantly dwelling upon the dying of Christ, we are still bearing it about with us in the body, and all the time the great fact is doing its part in our spiritual life in strongly resisting sin, and in building up that life which the Apostle speaks of in the closing part of my text.

(b) *The Apostle found that the bearing about of the dying of Jesus intensified his love for Him whose love he had formerly despised, and cast from him.* If you wish to find a statement of the feelings which filled the heart of the Apostle in connection with his former attitude toward the death of Christ, you have only to turn to the seventh chapter of this epistle, where, speaking of the sorrow of the Corinthians in reference to the past unworthiness of their conduct, he says, (verse 11)—"For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort,

what carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what zeal, yea *what revenge!*" Think of these words, "what indignation, what vehement desire, what zeal, what revenge!" This was precisely how Paul felt each time that the fact was presented to his mind that Christ Jesus had died. It is how every child of God feels who really bears about in the body the dying of Christ. An unutterable tenderness of heart, that he should have been so long in realising the marvellous love and compassion brought to light in the sacrifice of Jesus, takes possession of him. Even the bearing about the dying of one who has been with us on earth, and to whom, from thoughtlessness rather than from evil intent, we have shown ourselves unkind, is no light burden. There is, for instance, nothing in ancient or modern literature more touching than the notes appended by her husband to the letters of Mrs Carlyle. Immersed in study, and suffering from persistent dyspepsia, he, I am afraid, neglected the fragile creature who, with a mind in some respects more brilliant even than his own, day and night planned for him, and worked hard to let his genius have undisturbed scope. Some of you will recollect how sad the circumstances were in which the death of this highly gifted woman took place, and now, only since the decease of Mr Carlyle himself, have we come to the knowledge of how he bore about in the body the dying of her, who in one

sense gave her life for him ; for even to weariness, and painfulness, and disease she lovingly ministered to him. It is so touching to find, written by himself, at the close of some letters of hers which he had been reading,—letters which reveal what he ought long before to have seen and owned—words, such as these, “How can I endure all that?” “Oh, my darling little woman.” “Alas! alas! sinner that I am!” “Oh, my poor martyr darling!” “Alas! alas! how little did I ever know of these secret wishes and necessities—now, or ever!” “Ay de mi!” How again and again his heart smites him as he realises his coldness, and want of thought for her in little matters during the years that were past! How the heart of the great philosopher becomes as the heart of a little child, and the strong rugged nature melts into blinding tears, and the cry comes, as from a soul in agony,

“O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!”

When I read, not the letters of Mrs Carlyle only, but the notes of self-accusation appended to them by her husband, I thought I was able to understand, better than I had ever done before, the feeling of Paul, and of men and women like him, in whom the dying of Jesus stirs up the intense longing and love which are begotten of the thought, that we had in the past of our life accounted His death as a matter of no moment.

“O, the bitter pain and sorrow
That a time could ever be,
When I proudly said to Jesus
Thy death-wounds are nought to me!”

Blessed be God, the fact of Christ's death does not, as in other cases, preclude the possibility of our making manifest by repentance, and by the holy zeal of the after life, those feelings of which the Corinthians were cognisant. The Christ to whose dying we were so long insensible, is the *living* Christ. We can, therefore, in some sort, atone for the past neglect and scorn. There can be the “vehement desire,” “the burning zeal,” “the revenge,” taken upon ourselves, for the wrong which we have done. It was our pride that led us to regard the lowly Nazarene and His work as matters of but small account; we shall therefore avenge Christ and His dying upon our pride. How? We shall crucify our pride—we shall abase ourselves before the cross of Calvary, but, most of all, before Him who hung upon the cross. It was enmity that led to our saying—“Away with Him! We will not have this man to rule over us.” This enmity must, therefore, be crucified; it must be slain, and henceforward, and for ever, Jesus must be to us the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, the brother born for the day of adversity. It was our covetous, penurious spirit that grudged, out of our abundance, to bestow upon the cause of Christ. Ah, this bearing about the dying of Jesus deals the

death-blow to our narrowness : it says, " He gave Himself for thee," what oughtest thou to give to Him ?

" Our souls, our bodies, we resign ;
With joy we render Thee
Our all, no longer ours but Thine,
To all eternity."

(c). *In bearing about His dying, we have fellowship with Him in suffering.*—My chief object, not only here, but in all that has preceded, is to impress upon you the idea, that the bearing about the dying of Jesus is not a *sentiment* but a *reality*. There is an aspect of the dying of Jesus which touches powerfully the feelings. It is not possible for any one to look upon the wonderful painting of the crucifixion, by Reubens—a copy of which forms one of the treasures of our National Gallery—and to remain altogether unmoved. Standing before it the other day, I could understand how one, rude and boisterous in his mirth, was some time since arrested by the awful scene as it was depicted on the canvas, and was found gazing upon it till the tears rolled down his face, and the heart was taken out of his merriment. The dying of Jesus made its impression, but not the impression which it made on Paul, and which it makes upon everyone who comprehends that the dying of Christ is not a thing which can be presented on canvas. That, as it seems to me, is beginning to be understood better than it was. How seldom do our great masters of modern art paint the crucifixion, as compared with the frequency with

which the old masters made it the subject of representation. My explanation of this fact is, that most of these masters worked for the Church of Rome, which has always made it a special feature in its teaching of the people, to set before them the physical aspects of the Redeemer's suffering, so that the feelings might be touched, and the sentiment of the cross, as distinguished from its practical results, be obtruded on the notice of the worshippers. As the real meaning of these sufferings, and the objects which they contemplated became better understood, pictorial representations of the dying of Jesus were less in demand; and Hunt's "Shadow of the Cross" becomes more influential than the blood, and physical anguish of Reuben's great painting. The dying of Jesus was intended, from the first, to intimate that we were to have fellowship with Him in suffering; that as He died for sin, so must we die to it; and that the dying should not be easy for us, any more than it was for Him. That, however, is what you cannot put into a picture, you must put it into your life; you must work out the grand thought there, and must, like Jesus, rise to the crown by the cross. One of the most interesting subjects of Biblical research would be to discover how often, and under what varied aspects, this great question of bearing about the dying of Jesus is presented in the New Testament. You will find it lurking in out-of-the-way corners where you would scarcely expect it to be. Sometimes it is Paul declaring that he is

“crucified with Christ;” praying that he may be made conformable to Christ’s death, asserting that he is filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh. At other times, it is Peter urging the Christians of the dispersion “to rejoice, inasmuch as they are partakers of Christ’s sufferings;” and, again, it is John the beloved, saying nothing of suffering, nothing of dying, but putting it in this way, “as Christ is, so are we in this world.” Every one that bears about the dying of Jesus knows what that means. It is this, as He was despised, and rejected of men, so the servant is not greater than his Lord; as He had His temptation in the wilderness, so, for us, also, there is one who goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; as He had His Gethsemane, so for us, there either has been, or will be, some moment of a supreme anguish, when we shall be fain to cry, “O, my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me!” As for Him, Calvary, with its cross and its darkness meant dying, so for us, who bear about with us His dying, there is a cross which the Master’s voice points out, as He says, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” All this pertains, let me say, not to the realm of poetry, nor to that of fiction, nor to that of painting, but to that of an every-day practical life, which drinks of the cup of which Jesus drank, and is baptised with the baptism wherewith He was baptised.

II.—*The practical outcome and results of this bearing of the dying of Jesus.*—Here we are confronted with a paradox which arrests the attention, and which lead us to enquire how these things can be? It is the old mystery of life, springing from under the ribs of death, or rather of death and life existing simultaneously, as Paul presents it in a subsequent part of this Epistle—“*As dying, and behold we live.*” Long years before the Christ of God became incarnate, the mystery of grace was forshadowed by the mystery of nature. The husbandman placed in the ground the seed, and from the death of the seed came the life that made glad the hearts of the reapers by the abundant harvest. There was more in it, however, than this. It was not only life springing from death, but life *nourished* by death; for the seed originally planted in the ground gave to the living stem its own life. Jesus laid hold of this great fact in nature, and said, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” So, His own death brought forth for Him the rich fruit of a life which endures for evermore. In the soul of the believer, Christ our Life springs out of Christ who died; and while we bear about with us the dying of Jesus, we are, all the time, nourishing by that dying, the life that is manifest in our body. With the two following points I shall conclude this discourse.

(a) *That we have to do with a living personal*

Jesus.—If you wish to trace to its source the formalism that is contented with a mere name to live, you have it in the fact, that to many in all our churches, *Jesus is not a living real personage.* Doctrinally, these men are all right, but then a doctrine cannot take the place of the personality of Jesus. You cannot live upon a description of wheat, or of bread, however accurate and scientific the description may be. In order to nourish and strengthen the body you must live upon the bread itself. In like manner, you cannot spiritually live upon Confession of Faith descriptions of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus ; it must be upon Jesus, the living Jesus, the Bread of Life ; and just as a man will find nourishment in bread, though he may be almost entirely ignorant of how it came, from the seed planted in the ground, to assume that form, so, I venture to say, that a man will find nourishment for the divine life, in living by faith upon the personal Jesus, who is at the right hand of God, although his knowledge may be but scant as to the doctrinal aspects of the incarnation, and of the atonement. We are not assembled to-day around the bier of a dead Nazarene, but to hold communion with the living Son of Man, who was dead, and behold He lives for evermore, and hath the keys of the invisible world, and of death." Faith lives upon the dying of Christ, and builds up in the believer thereby, a life which is justly called the life of Jesus. Mark, now, how this living of Jesus causes a new life to spring up in us. Take as the

foundational promise the words, "Because I live ye shall live also," and then, read the following passage—Romans vi. 5-11—"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *His* resurrection; Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For He that is dead is free from sin. Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This whole passage proceeds upon the supposition that we are dealing with a personal, living Being, not with a doctrine, not with a principle even, but with One over whom death hath no more dominion. In medical science, life, when in extremity, is sometimes saved by the transfusion of blood, or by the transfusion of life, for, to adopt the language of Scripture, "the blood is the life thereof." Now, what sometimes happens in the practice of the physician happens in all cases with Christ and the believer. It is His blood, His dying transfused into the spiritual system of the man, which becomes life to us, a life that is incorruptible, and that never dies. Here, again, we fall back upon that wonderful say-

ing in the first clause of our text, "We bear about with us in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus," and we discover a fresh meaning in Paul's words. It is the death of Jesus, flowing through every part—through heart, through artery, through vein, that constitutes our life, our truest, highest life, that, even, which is hid with Christ in God.

(b) *When Christ lives in us, His life will be manifest in our body.*—Vitality asserts for itself visibility. Even among the strangest surroundings it puts forth its claims to be seen. My eye rested some time ago upon the blackened, shortened trunk of what had been once a fruitful pear tree. It had, when planted, I have no doubt, stood in the open country, but now it has houses surrounding it on all sides, and the hard unyielding pavement lies close up to the bark, which seems shrivelled, darkened and dead. But summer after summer, since I first observed it, it has put forth a few green leaves, shewing that there is life, and that the life must make itself seen, despite the altered circumstances of the tree. So the life which Christ imparts will not only suffice for the day of your prosperity, but will live and manifest its life through the day of your adversity. Paul asserts this great principle in the words of my text, "That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body, or, as in the next verse, in our mortal flesh." That life is like Him who is the Life of man, "It cannot be hid." Paul believed, as I have shewn you, in a personal

Jesus, but, he believed, also, in a *visible* Jesus, a Jesus that might be seen by the eyes of his fellow-men ; seen, not as he is at the right hand of God, surrounded with the bright glory of His resurrection life, but seen as to the graces of His character, as to the beauty of His holiness, as to the riches of His love, in them who, by bearing about His dying in the body, make manifest His life in their mortal flesh. A spiritual recluse may have life, but it is life under morbid conditions ; it is life out of sympathy, in one of its main features, with the life of Christ, and, perhaps, it so far gives the world a wrong idea of the highest and truest life that ever existed on earth. Combined with this making manifest of the life of Jesus in our body, there stands a responsibility which must needs be realised by them that bear about with them the dying of the Lord Jesus. We occupy the position of Christ's representatives, and as the world sees and judges us, they see, and judge Christ Himself. Some one to whom this idea is new, may feel inclined to put it away from himself, and to say, "The world will judge of Christ by the New Testament, and by the Gospels." In part it will, but the conclusive element in the judging is the life of Christ, manifest in our mortal flesh. The Gospels present to us Christ Jesus in words, the Christian, Christ-like man presents Him in life ; moving, speaking, acting, having compassion upon them that are ignorant, and out of the way ; lifting up the sorrowful, heal-

ing the diseased, and making life and light as near to each other in reality, as they are in sound.

Is no allowance to be made, it may be asked, for human weakness and human frailty in this reproduction of the life of Jesus? I do not regard with favour this word "allowance." It is so apt to lower the ideal of that glorious life that is in Christ. But, it may be admitted, that there is this distinction—the life of Jesus is a perfect thing, and was so from the first; the life of Christ, in us, is marked off from that other, by growth. Hence the apostle, while calling for the fullest possible manifestation of the life of Christ in our body, makes the demand with a constant looking forward to a perfection of life, which is not to be attained here, but which will be attained when we come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

In the intercessory prayer of Jesus there are depths which none of us have sounded; glimpses of a future whose glory is unspeakably great, and of a glory reached by means of the Christ of God being *in us*, and forming our life. The glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be *made perfect in One*. "That they may be made;" it is coming; then we who did bear about with us the dying of Jesus, we who were crucified with Christ, we who were planted into the likeness of his resurrection, we whose life was simply Christ living in us, shall be glorified together with Him, and shall not only *behold* His glory, but *share in it* for ever and ever.

LABORARE EST ORARE.

“But the hermit, resting neither
Hand nor hatchet, meekly said :
‘He who does not daily labour,
May not ask for daily bread.

“Think not that my graces slumber
While I toil throughout the day ;
For all honest work is worship,
And to labour is to pray.

“Think not that the heavenly blessing
From the workman’s hand removes ;
Who does best his task appointed,
Him the Master most approves.”

WILLIAM ALLEN BUTLER.

1871.

NEHEMIAH iv. 6.—“For the people had a mind to work.”

FOR Christian workers the book of Nehemiah will always possess a special charm. It contains principles which are as applicable to the great struggle against evil now, as they were in the days when the mocking hatred of Sanballat threatened to overwhelm the rising fortunes of the children of Israel. To this enemy of the Jews, it seemed at first an altogether incredible thing that they, so feeble and defenceless, should attempt work that would occupy so long a time, and which would demand resources, the possession of which was an impossibility for a race so poor. Calculating upon the

weakness of the Israelites who had returned from Babylon, and animated by determined hostility to them, Sanballat and his partisans endeavoured to laugh down the pretensions of the Jews. "Such a wall as they could build would be so weak, that if a fox tried to get over it, he would break it down!" But when, despite all their scorn, the work began to make progress, and the great gaps which had been made in it by the Babylonians were being gradually filled up, they changed their tone, and admitted that matters were looking serious, and that it would take more than laughter and gibes to bring to confusion the work which was being carried on so vigorously by Nehemiah and his friends. It was resolved, accordingly, to stop the building by main force. Gathering to himself certain allies, Sanballat hoped to take the working parties by surprise, and to effect their complete destruction.

The chapter from which I have selected the words of my text contains a detailed account of the manner in which this threatened attack was met by the Tirshatha of the Jews. Even as applicable to these times, the narrative is full of interest. We are reminded of the saying of the Latin lyric poet—*"Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona Multi . . ."* Before the nineteenth century, before the word "Christian" was heard, there were such things on earth as high-souled trust in God, as the sacramental host standing shoulder to shoulder in the common cause, such things as earnest work and earnest

prayer. I feel, therefore, that it is no arbitrary treatment of this text when I propose to consider in connection with it THE CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS IN CHRISTIAN WORK.

I. *There must be a single-hearted reliance on God.* In the forefront of this great movement in the days of Nehemiah stood JEHOVAH. There had gone up from the heavy hearts of the captives by the streams of Babel, many a cry to the Lord God of Sabbaoth. When Nehemiah first heard of the ruined state of Jerusalem, and of the affliction of his countrymen, he says, "I sat down and wept, and prayed before the God of heaven." When the king of Persia put at last the question, "For what dost thou make request?" he spoke to God before he spoke to the king, "so I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said to the king." When Sanballat laughed him and his work to scorn, the cry goes up from the cup-bearer of Artaxerxes the king, "hear, O our God." When the attack upon the builders was expected, and when many forebodings of disaster and defeat took possession of the faint-hearted ones, "nevertheless," says Nehemiah, "we made our prayer unto our God." Everything seems to be full of God, no movement without consulting Him; no hope for ultimate success, save through Him. Does not this same principle run through all true Christian work? It matters not whether that work concern itself mainly with our own spiritual foes, or with the aggressive aspect of Christianity as against

the world that lies in sin and iniquity. Nothing lastingly good, or lastingly great can be accomplished apart from reliance upon JEHOVAH.

“Our sure and all sufficient help is in JEHOVAH’S name.

His name who did the heaven create, and who the earth did frame.”

I have seen, for instance, many efforts made by my fellow-men after self-reformation; I have seen a vice which had been dragging them away, bemoaned and banned by them, and expressions whose sincerity not even the most sceptical could doubt, coming from a heart into which the iron of past misdeeds had entered, and I felt inclined to say, if ever there was one who “had a mind to work,” it is this one. But, alas! the one condition of success in work such as this had been overlooked. God was not entreated to come with them into the field of battle, and hence when the onset was made by the foe, they were once more overcome, and the wall which they fondly imagined had been built between themselves and evil, was found to have been built with untempered mortar. Nor is it otherwise in our conflict with the world. The impression which we make upon the serried ranks of evil is of the very faintest, unless we have God with us. Before the heathen abroad, and the heathen at home are brought into our Father’s house, we must abound in prayer to Him who is mightier than our mightiest foes; to Him whose eye is ever on us; who loves us and desires our safety, and who has promised help and victory

to all them that call upon Him. It is in His strength and His only that we can conquer.

The Church's success against heathenism does not depend primarily upon organisation, nor upon the number of agents employed, nor upon the pecuniary resources at her command. It depends mainly upon a sustained spirit of prayerfulness, and upon the presence of God in response to her prayers. If any one would understand the rapid progress of Christianity in its earlier years, when it passed from continent to continent, crossed great seas, overleaped great mountains, which were as the land-marks of nations, he must not look for it in any of the means to which I have just referred. He must look for it in the fact, that its earliest missionaries (and all its members in these days were missionaries) were men who "had a mind to work," and, that in their working, they gave the first place in their thoughts, and in their prayers, to this great principle which actuated Nehemiah and those who laboured with him, to build up again the walls of Jerusalem. It is worth inquiring whether we, in the present day, are not apt to place foremost in our work the elements of external power, rather than that inner and spiritual element which connects itself with the presence of JEHOVAH. Our modern religious life requires to be reminded of the old song of degrees, "Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

II.—*In work for God we must carefully consider the issues which are at stake.* When Nehemiah addresses himself to the people who were minded to work, he brings some of these issues before them : “Fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives and your houses.” It depended upon their work whether these relations so dear to them, should be slaves, or free ; whether their houses should be homes, or mere dwellings for an oppressed, down-trodden race. Certainly, these were grave and serious issues, and the mere fact that they knew what the issues were, and that they had a mind to work and to *fight*, if need were, went far to secure a prosperous result. But grave as was the issue presented to these earnest-minded Jews, more grave and solemn still are the issues presented now to Christian workers. This is the question : Shall the world become the prey of evil, or shall it be under the dominion of God and of His Christ ? Is it to be the kingdom of Satan, or the kingdom of Jesus ? There has been given to us the crowning evidence as to how God himself regards the matter in reference to this world of ours. Although there be around us in space a thousand worlds larger than ours, still this one of them all seems to be the chosen arena wherein is to be decided the grand question as between good and evil, between holiness and sin. In order to decide it He has given His only begotten Son ; and sent Him to suffer, to agonise, to die, and to conquer. It can be no slight issue which has

drawn from the Eternal this, the greatest gift of His love ; which has necessitated the strong crying and tears of Gethsemane, and the agony of the cross of Calvary. But how, it may be said, does all this stand related to Christian work ? The question is, I grant you, perfectly legitimate, and one that must be answered before we can with our whole mind give ourselves to work. Here, then, is the answer. It is of God's fixed purpose that this great issue to which He is by solemn declaration committed, shall not be brought about without our earnest co-operation with Jesus. With a world ruined by sin, with the marks and scars of evil all around us ; with the once fair temple of humanity lying in ruins, and knowing that its restoration stands related to our work, what are *we* doing to bring round the blessed and glorious time, when the walls of the temple shall be built up, and the offering of a broken and contrite heart shall lie upon the altar ? "For your brethren," said the Jewish Tirshatha of old, "For your brethren," cries the voice of the Eternal to all who have a mind to work. The God who made you, made them ; the soul which He implanted in you is not more valuable than the soul which He implanted in them. It cannot be that you, who profess to have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, should be content to see them fall under the dominion of him whose kingdom is darkness, and whose end is death. There are issues which may be considered in reference to ourselves in work of this

kind. There is, and can be no happiness to any one who is in the vineyard of the Lord apart from work. The very consciousness that work is expected at our hands, and that it is not done, the consciousness that that is unworthy of the position which we have taken up, induces a fevered feeling of dissatisfaction with ourselves, which at times amounts even to misery. It is only when we "have a mind to work" that our soul is brought into full sympathy with the will of God, and that we know the blessedness of those who are labouring together with the Eternal for the regeneration of the world, and for the bringing in of the glad day, when "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, when men shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God." Our reward, which is of grace, will then come; for, "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

III.—*Christian work, to be successful, must go hand in hand with vigilance and with continuous exertion.* In the trying position in which the Jews were placed, it is hard to say which was the most important of the two—watchfulness or working. We may aver that neither would have been successful without the other. If the work were done in the midst of those who are altogether friendly, watchfulness might be largely dispensed with. But all work for Christ is conducted in a world where

hostility to Jesus is the rule, and love for Him the exception. Passing, as we are, through an enemy's country, we cannot afford to make our march with careless step, or with unvigilant mind. If we choose as workers to go back upon our own experience, I feel certain that we shall find our failures and our disasters to have risen from want of vigilance. We did not, like Nehemiah, "set a watch." Matters were going well with us, and we said, "to-morrow shall be as this day." We were confident that the same resisting of sin would characterise us now which had characterised us in the past. We neglected the point which, of all others, was the weak point, imagining that the strong point was the measure of our ability to resist, while, in fact, we should have gauged our power of resistance by the weakest, and not by the strongest point. That was the moment when the enemy had us at an advantage, and the work of our growing Christ-likeness was thrown back. It is the same, as I have said, in church work. Vigilance is required here to an extent which is not always apprehended by God's people. The builders are off their guard, when some matter of feeling, or of temper suddenly presents itself; some matter which, if we had been vigilant, would have had no power as against the importance of working for Christ, or as against the duty of building up the walls of Jerusalem. There are certain occasions when the want of vigilance is more apt to prove disastrous

than others. I always feel anxious on this head when *success* either has been, or is near to being gained. "Now," we say, "we may lay down the implements of our work, or the weapons of our warfare; we may lay aside the shield, the helmet, the breastplate. Our prayers do not require to be so frequent, nor so fervent—success is almost within our grasp." If there be any moment in which watching unto prayer is essential, it is the moment to which I refer, for then the enemy makes his deadliest, and oftentimes his most successful attack. Pray without ceasing; watch without ceasing. We recognise in Martin Luther a man of prayer. You recollect how hard the traveller in the inn was to be convinced, that in the adjoining room there were not overnight two persons, although in reality there was but the one,—and that one Luther, who in prayer was really speaking to God, and pausing for the answer, and speaking to God as if God had spoken to him. Even this man, great worker though he was, seems to have become enervated at times by success. "Doctor," said his wife to him one day, "how is it that, while subject to the papacy, we prayed so often and with such fervour, whilst now we pray with the utmost coolness, and very seldom?" Watchfulness, prayer, work: work, prayer, watchfulness. Such is the threefold cord which cannot be broken. Either strand of the cord is all but useless in itself, but combined, there is in it a power against which the

gates of hell cannot prevail. The elements of continuity is also to be desiderated in connection with Christian work. What is done spasmodically is not of much account : prayer engaged in at long intervals, does not prevail ; vigilance exercised only now and again, does not succeed in keeping the foe at a distance. It must be, as the Apostle says, "ALWAYS ABOUNDING in the work of the Lord."

IV. *Marked success in Christian work is not attainable without the union of all classes of the Christian community.*—Some few years ago I was privileged to look over a mason's day-book, going back to the beginning of this century, and containing the names of the men, the work on which each had been engaged, and the wages to which each had been entitled. You may be sure that many curious and interesting facts were brought to light. But you have before you a much older "Workmen's Day-Book" than that. You have a time-book which is between 2000 and 3000 years old, and which is all the more interesting on account of its antiquity. I have been struck with the large number of different classes represented in the re-building of the walls of Jerusalem. Here are priests, and Levites, and nobles, and rulers, and goldsmiths, and apothecaries, and merchants ; and, so far as the day-book goes, it represents, with notes, the amount of energy thrown into the work. For instance, immediately after the entry in reference to the Tekoites you find this note, "but their nobles put not their necks to the work of

the Lord." Happily that was an exceptional case, otherwise the walls of Jerusalem would never have been repaired. But, to counterbalance this, mention is made of one Baruch the son of Zabbai, who *earnestly* repaired a portion additional to that which had been originally assigned him; a most interesting character this—a man with a noble hunger for work, and whose hands were glorified above those of the nobles of Tekoa. Some, perhaps, are of opinion that while there are so many classes represented in the day-book, there are no *women* engaged on the building of the walls. Let them, before finally making up their minds, read the 12th verse of the 3rd chapter of Nehemiah,—“And next unto him repaired Shallum, the son of Halohesh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, *he and his daughters.*” I am aware that one of the most recent commentators upon the book of Nehemiah says—“It seems almost impossible that women were pressed into the service, especially when it was one of so much danger. By “daughters” we must understand, therefore, the villages contained in Shallum’s district.” It is not easy to see how “villages” should exist in the heart of Jerusalem; nor do I think that the daughters of Shallum required to be pressed into the service. Possibly they were like some of our modern daughters, who, in their zeal and love for Christ are forward in inducing or even pressing into the service, fathers and mothers. Be that as it may, I am delighted to find in this old-

world story the traces of womanhood loyal to God, and ready to serve Him. As it was then, so it is now, work for Christ goes on best when all classes are combined for the promotion and advancement of His kingdom. Men, women, fathers, and children, rich and poor, learned and unlearned ought to know it is neither rank, nor age, nor sex has any monopoly in working for God. I find a notable absence in these operations which have formed the groundwork of my remarks, of one class which in modern times is almost universally found in connection with Christian work, namely, those who undertake the department of criticism. There is no mention made of any of the Jews sauntering about from one part of the wall to another; suggesting to some willing worker that the bevel of such and such a stone was not quite exact, that the finish of the mason-work was very poor, and that the lime had too much sand in it, and that, to make a really good job, the lime should be poured hot into the joints. In the process of years the church has made the acquaintance of this class, "Sermons are either too short or too long, too florid or too bald, too doctrinal or too evangelistic. It is not a difficult thing to make a sermon, nor difficult to preach one; the work of the ruling elder is a mere sinecure, the managers of the secular affairs of the Church are generally incompetent; the member who lays himself out for saving souls makes too much work about a very simple matter; the member who gives himself to the effort of reclaiming the intemperate,

would better see to it that he does not put the gospel out of its place," and so forth through the whole gamut of criticisms. Now, to real workers this may prove very annoying for a time, but the feeling soon wears off, as they see that in very few cases are the critics workers, and that in the majority of cases they know not whereof they affirm. I said a little ago that there were none of that class among the workers upon the walls of Jerusalem. I should have said that there were none *directly* mentioned, but if there were any, you might be sure to find them among the nobles of Tekoa, who put not their necks to the work. That is the class who uniformly, withdrawing their necks, substitute their tongues, and thereby hinder rather than advance the work. Now, what I object to in this is, not that Christian work should be criticised—it has certainly no right to set itself above criticism—but that the critics are not themselves workers. If they were, they would learn something of the work and its difficulties; their views of mistakes would be much more charitable, and, by entering the ranks of labourers, they would materially add to the working power of the church.

IV. *Success in Christian work cannot be attained without attention to details.* To some minds there is nothing acceptable save what is great and magnificent, something which must be looked at through the haze of a rich imagination. When you descend from the grand to the commonplace, from the

general to the particular, the whole charm of the work is gone. It pertains, as they say, to the region of drudgery. The men of old who "had a mind to work," were not of this stamp, neither they nor the men who led them. The grandeur of their idea (a restored Jerusalem) is not more remarkable than the attention given by them to the minutest details. How systematically the work was laid out. Very dry work it might seem to be, this marking off of the valley-gate, and the water-gate, and the fish-gate; this arranging of men to hold the spears, and the shields and the bows, of others to build upon the walls, of others to bear the burdens. One remarkable illustration of this minute attention to detail occurs in the following words—"Moreover, the old gate repaired, Jehoiada and Meshullam, they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof," (iii. 6.) Now, the man of grand ideas, while discoursing eloquently upon the splendid result which would be accomplished by having Jerusalem as of old surrounded by walls, would likely have resented it as an intrusion upon his magnificent vision, that some workman, grimy with dust, and with his trowel or his axe in hand had come upon him with the question, "What size of lock will be required for the door of the old gate?" And, still, the want of the lock there, might have imperilled the safety of the whole city. I repeat it, therefore, there must be detail in every great work. It is an element of effectiveness which

no reach of plan, no enthusiasm of purpose can dispense with. If a man conceives the idea of being learned, but cannot, or will not toil through the myriad little drudgeries necessary to carry him on, it is impossible for him to become eminent in learning. If a man wishes to serve the cause of Christ, if he has a mind to work, he will succeed best by combining, with general scope and vigour, the looking to common occasions and small things. The conversion of the world to God is a magnificent thing to think of, and a still more magnificent thing to achieve, but it is to be gained by the conversion of individuals, and even the building up of the individual into a living temple for God's inhabitation is not a thing that can be accomplished save by attention to minute detail. After the man has received Jesus, it is necessary for him to study with care the word of God, and to guard against faults of temper and of disposition. We read in the Acts of the Apostles of a certain Jew who was instructed in the way of the Lord, an eloquent man, of fervent spirit. There came to hear him one day a husband and wife (perhaps I should say a wife and husband); they did not go off into extravagant laudations of his eloquence; they did not say, "now that Apollos has become a preacher, all that is necessary has been done." They saw that something was wanting, that Apollos knew only the baptism of John. They were true workers these two—Priscilla and Aquila, "they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God *more perfectly*." They wished

him to be not only a pillar in the house of God, but a pillar adorned with lily-work.

Besides these five elements of success in Christian work, there are others suggested by the chapter in which are contained the words of my text, but these must meanwhile suffice. If they shall have stirred up in any of you a more sincere desire to work, and to work in the lives of these worthies of the old times, this discourse will have effected the design which I contemplated in the preparation of it, and it will have added to the power and efficiency of the congregation as a centre for Christian work. Let me, for the present, take leave of this subject in the words of one who, whatever his shortcomings in many respects, had a hearty contempt, and an almost savage scorn for idleness.

And who art thou that braggest of thy life of idleness ; complacently shewest thy bright gilt equipages, sumptuous cushions, appliances for folding of the hands to more sleep ? Looking up, looking down, around, behind, or before, discernest thou, if it be not in Mayfair alone, any *idle* hero, saint, god, or even devil ? Not a vestige of one. In the heavens, in the earth, in the waters under the earth, is none like unto thee. Thou art an original figure in this creation, a denizen in Mayfair alone, in the extraordinary century, or half century alone ! “One monster there is in the world—an idle man.”—THOS. CARLYLE. I repeat it with the change of but one word : one monster there is in the Church of Christ—an idle man.



“HOMO SUM.”

“There was a marriage-table where One sat,
Haply unnoticed, till they craved His aid :
Thenceforward does it seem that He hath made
All virtuous marriage-tables consecrate :
And so, at this, where without pomp or state
We sit and only say, or, mute, are fain
To wish the simple words, “God bless these twain !”
I think that He who “in the midst” doth wait
Oft-times, would not abjure our prayerful cheer,
But, as at Cana, list with gracious ear
To us, beseeching that the love divine
May ever at this household table sit,
Make all His servants who encompass it,
And change life’s bitterest waters into wine.”

MRS CRAIK.

JOHN ii. 2.—“And both Jesus was called, and His disciples to the marriage.”

It is very interesting to mark how, both at the beginning and at the close of His public ministry, Jesus shows His sympathy with the innocent pleasures of social life. The first miracle which He performed was at a marriage feast ; and not many hours before He was betrayed into the hands of His enemies, we find Him present at a feast of love prepared for Him by Simon the leper, Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, taking part in the festivity of the hour. He

entered upon His work in a spirit widely different from that of His great forerunner, who came neither eating nor drinking, and whose stern asceticism led him to avoid the habitations of men. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and Jesus met the carping criticism as to His social instincts with the phrase, "wisdom is justified of her children." It was the great object of our Lord, under this aspect of His public work, to show that common everyday life, in all its phases, may be raised to a religious dignity, and that the loving smile of God, like the tender blue above, looks down on the whole round of existence. By His presence at this marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, He discountenanced very specially that form of religious narrowness which regards it as a misdemeanour for the public teacher of Christianity to mingle with society, or to hold any relationship to the social enjoyments of the people among whom he labours. I do not say that one occupying the position to which I have referred, and who should accept the invitations of the rich only in his flock, and refuse the invitations of the poor ; who should, when at the table of the rich flatter their weakness, and condone their sins—I do not say that such an one would be imitating the example of Jesus, who was brother to the high and brother to the low, who dined with the poor as readily as with the rich, and who sought how best to make these social hours minister to the higher and spiritual good of those who sat at the table with

Him. The family whose guest Jesus was on the occasion referred to in this chapter, belonged not to the higher, but to the lower ranks of society. We cannot imagine the wine so soon coming to an end, if the household in Cana had been distinguished by the possession of abundant resources. This is a case, therefore, of a king in disguise, condescending to eat and to drink with those of his subjects whose worldly estate was of no great value: laying aside the robes of royalty, and casting Himself, with a heart that honestly enjoyed it, into the happy relaxation of the hour.

I have chosen this text with the view of bringing before you the intensely human sympathy of the Lord of life, and of strengthening, at the same time, your conviction that even now, at the right hand of God, He is not above being interested in the affairs which constitute our every-day life. I have an object before my mind in adopting this line of discourse. I wish you to comprehend more clearly that Jesus, the Elder Brother, is not very far from any one of us, that—

“Though now ascended up on high,
He bends on earth a brother’s eye.”

I.—*Christ has sympathy with the anxieties of men in reference to temporal things.*—The position of affairs in the household of Cana was of such a kind as to call forth a large measure of anxiety on the part of those to whom belonged the responsibility of providing for the comfort of the assembled guests. On the occasion of a marriage, even the

poorest have a strong wish to appear as if possessed of plenty. The family honour stands connected with the maintaining of this appearance; but it was scarcely to be expected that the Son of God should work a miracle on behalf of a family of peasants, whose poverty rendered it necessary that the festivities of a marriage party should be curtailed. In all the other miracles of Christ, the rule laid down by the Roman critic is strictly observed—

“Nec deus intersit nisi dignus vindici nodus
Inciderit.”

When Christ interposes it is almost always for the restoration of health or of life, or for the deliverance from some peril which cannot be removed by human means. For the wind and waves to be hushed into calm by the word of His power, *that* seems a God-like thing; that a poor diseased one looking forward to death as the only gateway to rest, should find, at the word of the Master, that his flesh comes back like the flesh of a little child—that seems work in keeping with the idea which we have of the Son of God: that the beautiful young life which had faded like a morning dream from the embrace of loving hearts, should be restored at the “*Talitha Cumi*” of the Great Prophet—we say, when we read of it, “who can give life but God only?” But, that the Son of God, who had come down from heaven, should put forth the power and Godhead which are in Him, to furnish a supply of wine to a few villagers in Galilee, seems almost unworthy of Him who had come to open the kingdom

of heaven to all believers. So some minds look at it : to me it seems as if Christ had placed this, His first miracle, in relation to human anxieties and responsibilities, with the express design of teaching us that He is to be approached by His brethren, not about what is spiritual only, but about the temporal also. He is not a Christ for great occasions only, but for all occasions ; He stands ready to help, not only when there is no bread in the house, and when absolute want stares men in the face, but amidst the anxieties and the pinchings, now on this side, now on that, which we know by the common designation of "trying to make both ends meet." The general idea of Jesus is, that help from Him is to be expected only in some great emergency, and that it would betray an undue familiarity with that sacred name, and with His mighty power, to invoke either, except in some grave crisis of our life. Now, this beginning of miracles which Jesus did, presents an altogether different view of His character. Why should the tradesman who is having a hard fight to keep his footing among those who are able to meet their engagements, not approach the living Saviour, and ask Him graciously to help him ? Why should the working man, who has for weeks been idle, think it unworthy of Christ to make for him an opening in the exercise of that providence which feeds and clothes all them that put their trust in Him ? The cares of motherhood, the almost incessant anxiety and worry connected with family affairs, are light-

ened, and made bearable, only when brought to Christ. "We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Though, to an onlooker who does not understand how truly human Jesus is, it may seem that these temporal anxieties are things too paltry to carry to Him who has all power in heaven and on earth, we must recollect that Christ himself may see it to be different. His great wish is that "the new man" may grow up into its full stature. He finds that these cares and anxieties are impeding the growth, and it becomes, therefore, of consequence that they be taken out of the way, so that the attention may be given more entirely to that which is of supreme concern. You will find the true philosophy of prayer, no less than a clear perception of Christ's willingness to listen to our cry about the every-day cares of life, in the words of the well-known hymn—

" O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to Christ in prayer !"

II.—*Jesus when He gives, gives like a king.* Look once more at the narrative. His mother, observing the fact that the supply of wine for the guests had failed, apprises her son of it. This intimation is met with the words, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come!" You are aware, of course, that the Authorised

version gives a needlessly harsh translation of this expression ; a harshness which the Revised version follows. Literally, it is, " Woman, what is there to me and to thee ? " that is, there are higher obligations resting upon me, than those which spring out of the relationship between us. " The time is not yet come : when it is, I will act. " It is in vain to say, that there is nothing of rebuke in the words uttered on this occasion by Christ. The mother is evidently anxious to display the power which she knows to exist in the miraculously conceived Son of hers, and the reproof is as well-merited as it is humbly submitted to. Standing near the door, were six stone jars for the purpose of holding the water required for the ablutions which were commanded under the law. These, at Christ's order, were filled with water, and, without any word spoken, simply by the force of His will, the water is changed into wine. According to our English measures of capacity, the quantity of wine thus made by Him amounted to about 120 gallons. This king-like largeness of giving, runs through the whole procedure of Him who changed the water into wine. Five thousand men drawn together by the works of wonder which He did, and by the words of love and wisdom which He uttered, found themselves faint with hunger, and far from town or village. The Creator, Emanuel, God with us, in the most marvellous manner provides for their wants. After these wants had been abundantly supplied, there were

taken up *twelve baskets of fragments*. After His resurrection, and before He had ascended to His Father and to our Father, seven of His disciples are found engaged in their old occupation of fishing. We know how uncertain in regard to success is the work of those who follow this calling. Hour after hour of the night passes, and the nets are as light as when first they were cast into the lake of Tiberias. In the dawn of morning, the fishermen perceive one whom they take to be a stranger standing on the shore. He recommends them to cast the net on the right side of the fishing boat, and the result is that they were not able to draw it for *the multitude of fishes*. It would seem as if the three years' training of the Apostles had left the impression upon their minds, that the Christ who taught them gave like a king; for the large take of fishes leads the disciple whom Jesus loved to say, "It is the Lord!" The largeness and princeliness of His giving run through all His works. You drop, in the spring time, one seed of corn into the ground; now, mark the king-like nature of His giving. I plucked a stalk of corn from a field, over which the autumn wind was passing, making the heavy heads to bow, as if in assent to the song that comes from the blue sky, and from the waves that shimmer in the sunshine. "God is good! how great is His beauty and how great is His goodness, corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids!" The one seed which fell from the hand of the

sower had, I find, risen up into *seventy* well-formed grains, and each of these, multiplied by a fresh seventy, and that, again, by another, will very soon, in the accumulated figures of arithmetical progression, bid defiance to the power of calculation as possessed by man. Or, you are passing in spring through some of those secluded Highland glens, which resemble so closely the mountain gorges of the Palestine whose soil the feet of Jesus trod eighteen centuries ago, and you are arrested by the sight of a patch of blue, which seems as if a part of the sky had fallen earthward. It is the wild hyacinth which has sent up millions of flowers, blue as the blue of heaven ; the blue deepening into a purple that is richer than imperial Cæsar ever wore. It is the open hand of Christ that has fashioned them. And the rich abundance—whence comes it ? Comparatively few are the eyes that will behold them : some chance passer-by may cast a loving, wondering look upon them, and that is all. You can account for it in no wise, save by the glorious beneficence that showed itself in Cana of Galilee. He has made all these, because it is in His nature to do so. He cannot do otherwise. He is a king, and gives like a king, and so, earth is full of the glory of His love. And, if it be so in this great kingdom of nature, how much more is the kingdom of His grace distinguished by this feature of large giving. If the thing is to be done, whatever it be, it must be done after a kingly sort. Is sin to be forgiven ? Yes !

all sin! Is it to be removed? Yes! cast into the depth of the sea, and remembered against us no more for ever! Is the relation of man to God to be changed? Yes! man is no longer to be reckoned as an alien and an enemy. But, that is not enough for the largeness of a heart that has shelter in it for all the race of Adam. Man becomes a king, and a priest unto God: nay more, God's son, and is enabled to move up to the throne of the Eternal, and to lay his hand upon the arm of God, and say, "Abba, Father." Is prayer to be answered? Yes. I hear the voice of Jesus say, "be it unto thee according to thy wish." That surely is enough. For an *earthly* king it is, but this is no king of earth, limited by conditions of weakness, of time, of possession; and, therefore, language itself is beggared and bankrupt as it endeavours to tell, not only of His boundless resources, but of the open-handed, unstinted manner in which He bestows them. Listen to the labouring style of him whose readiness of speech is apparent throughout all his writings. When he comes to describe the giving power of Jesus, he says, "Now unto Him be glory in the church through Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." I can understand how, in view of this feature of the divine character, Paul should speak of God being not only merciful, but "rich in mercy," and should laud and magnify the exceeding riches of his grace.

III. *There is, in Christ, an intense sympathy not*

only with human anxiety, but with human joy.—He responds to the invitation which had been tendered to Him, and to His disciples, and the invitation, as we know, was not to the house of mourning, but to the house of mirth and gladness. A marriage feast brings with it suggestions not only of eating and of drinking, but also of rejoicing. The very presence of Jesus there, was, of itself, no small testimony to His sympathy with the joy, especially the social joy of the sons of men ; but it bears testimony also to the greatness of His nature. There is no test of greatness so essentially true, as that one have and exercise the power of coming out of himself, and casting himself into the trials or the gladness of others. Here, then, is the Son of man, not long entered upon His public ministry ; just beginning, as to His holy human nature, to realise that there lay before Him such a struggle with the powers of darkness as the world had never seen ; this son of man, with aspirations after everything holy, and beautiful and true, and just beginning to understand that falsehood and sin had so marred the fair creation of God, that there was no restoration of it possible, save through strong crying and tears, and death. He might have replied to the invitation, even though backed by His mother's loving entreaty, "I have other work to do than to attend marriage feasts. If you but knew how heavily the curse of God lies upon this sin-smitten world ; if you but saw how the whole creation travails together in

pain ; if you but knew the answer to the question, 'how shall man be just with God,' you would cease the vain endeavour to take me away from my true work, to such a frivolous thing as a marriage feast." Now, how different from all this is the attitude of Jesus to innocent mirthfulness? Possibly the old custom observed on such occasions was still a favourite mode of spending the days during which the feast lasted—that, namely, of entertaining each other with riddles. If so, there was one among them who had many hard questions to propound, who had, also, as forming part of a perfect manhood, a sense of humour which it is no profanation to say, flashes forth at times in His parables, and in His addresses to His apostles, and who casts Himself, with a ready sympathy, into the joy which prevails throughout the humble home of Cana. I trace the idea which refuses to contemplate Christ in any other light than that of the "man of sorrows," to the rising power of that Romanism which sought to associate the highest form of religion with the austerity of the recluse, and with the physical mortification of the ascetic. In a letter purporting to have been written by one Lentulus, it is said, "that Jesus seldom, if ever, smiled, and never laughed." Now, that one sentence of itself is sufficient not only to attest the spuriousness of the document, but to lead us to fix with approximate accuracy the time at which it was written. It belongs, evidently, to the same period as that which produced the Gospels of

the Infancy, and other books of the Apocryphal New Testament, in which not only is celibacy lauded as a higher and more God-glorifying thing than marriage, but the mother of Jesus has a whole "gospel" to herself. If such a representation of Jesus were correct, then we should expect to find Him sitting apart from the other guests at the marriage feast, and nursing that gloom and melancholy which are as alien to the genius of His religion, as they were to the personal feelings of the Son of Man while yet He sojourned on earth. The deep love manifested by Him for little children, and the readiness with which they came to Him, lead me to an altogether different conclusion from that to which I have just referred. And if, while there hung over Him the agony of Gethsemane, and the death of the cross, he did not separate himself from human joy, or from the outward expression of it, how, when the darkness is past, and He is seated in our nature at the right hand of God, can you suppose that He turns away with feelings of indignation, and contempt from the healthy joyfulness, and the innocent recreations by which this hard work-a-day life of ours is made more tolerable? I would not, for all the world, have a Christ from whom I must be parted when un sinful mirth and joy asked me to sit at their table. It sanctifies, and makes holy for me all my joyous hours, that the son of Mary, or, let me rather say, the Son of Man, claims it as his right to be there, and that when I enjoy myself, in the

company of my brethren, I can calculate upon the presence and the sympathy of my Elder Brother. Jesus, if you ask Him, will as certainly take His place at your table, spread either for hospitality or for fellowship, as He does at His own, where His broken body, and shed blood form the nourishment of our spiritual life. In our hours of relaxation, or of work, in the converse with those little ones, "whose angels do always behold the face of His Father," when the man becomes once more a child, and the stately matron leaps back into the sportive girl, the Jesus who shared in the joys of the marriage feast in Cana will be present if you ask Him. Still, if I can read the heart of Jesus, He delights in the innocent sports, and recreations of the young. In Christ's ideal church, as in the restored Jerusalem of the prophet's vision, "the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." Do you feel as if such an idea were somehow bringing Jesus too near to human affairs? Would you rather have a Christ who should stand farther back from you? Then it is plain you must look for a Christ other than Jesus Christ of Nazareth, over whom there is written in a loftier sense than the Roman poet ever dreamt of "*Homo sum, et nihil humanum a me alienum puto.*"

I wish this text of mine to bear practically upon what we call our enjoyments and recreations. I find from my text that Jesus was "bidden" or "called" to the feast. Those who bade Him were

acquainted with the character of Jesus. Already it had spread through Nazareth and the surrounding district how holy and unblameable was the life which He had led, how the words which He spake were words of wisdom, words which were "as goads, and as nails fastened by the master of assemblies." It is evident that when Christ was bidden to the feast there was nothing contemplated there which would in any way prove inconsistent with His reputation for wisdom and for holiness. So when you bid Christ to your feasts, or to your social enjoyments, remember the reputation of your guests: let there be nothing there to make Him sad while, all around, there are mirth and joy. Within the limits prescribed by the presence of Christ there is abundant scope for the purest enjoyment,—enjoyment that leaves behind it no pang and no shame. While you make manifest to the world that your religion is not a religion of sorrow, you are equally bound to make it manifest, for Christ's sake, and for your own sake, that is not a thing of foolish mirth, or of empty frivolity.

IV.—*All our social enjoyments should contemplate as their result that which was produced by the marriage feast of Cana:—viz., "Jesus manifested forth His glory."* It would be in vain to expect that any such miracle should take place as that which distinguished the marriage feast of Cana from all marriage feasts, whether before or since. But we must recollect that it does not require the perform-

ance of a miracle to manifest the glory of Jesus. That glory is made manifest through the beauty of a fresh, ingenuous spirit, which regards this world as the porch to the palace of the Great King; which reproduces in its healthy sympathy with human joy and human sorrow, the spirit of Him who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Such joy does justice to Jesus, whose character and life on earth have been misrepresented by the sombre spirit of the cloister.

There is one thing that convinces me of the necessity of keeping this subject before the mind of the Christian church, and that is the very small place which, since the ascension of Jesus, the church has given in her hymns of praise, to the sympathy of her Lord not only with the trials, but also with the joys of redeemed humanity. I cannot find in any of our hymnals employed in public worship, one whole hymn devoted to a subject, which should have so powerful an influence upon our life here. If the ecclesiastical hymnology is deficient in this respect, the distinctively evangelistic theology is no less at fault. In a collection of several hundred hymns of this kind there is not one which deals with this point. I am more than surprised at this. The professed object of such evangelistic work is not only by means of discourses, but by means of song, by "singing the gospel," to bring the outcast and the careless into saving relationship with Christ. To the fulfilment of this most desirable end, there is no

greater barrier than the idea, so widely spread abroad, that to be a Christian is to bid farewell to the social enjoyments of life; to march to battle under the banner of One who is emphatically a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. One good hymn or two, in the line of this discourse, would do much, I am convinced, to bring about the result with which this narrative of Christ's first miracle ends—not only that the glory of Jesus was manifested forth, but that men “believed on Him.”

SPIRITUS MINISTRANTES.

“All God’s angels come to us disguised ;
Sorrow and sickness, poverty and death,
One after other left their sorrowing marks,
And we behold the seraph’s face beneath,
All radiant with the glory and the calm,
Of having looked upon the front of God.”

LOWELL.

MATTHEW iv. 2.—“ . . . Behold, angels came and ministered
unto Him.

WHY “Behold?” I wish you to consider that question before I proceed further with this discourse. When one thinks that these four Gospels contain the record of the most wonderful life that was ever lived on earth, it creates no surprise that the word “Behold” should now, and again, occur. The wonder rather is, that every other sentence does not commence with it. You take up, for instance, a book produced by some one of our modern divines, and you will find this, and other interjectional expressions very liberally employed. But this book that tells of wondrous things on earth, and of still more marvellous things in heaven, deals very sparingly in either the sensational or the exclamatory. This fact, of course, tells in the direction of rendering the expression more effective when it

does occur: It is like the finger of the Spirit of God, pointing out some great and wonderful thing, which He is afraid we might pass by. Try it: "*Behold* I lay in Sion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone;" "*Behold*, thy King cometh, meek and having salvation;" "*Behold*, my hands and my feet;" "*Behold*, I send the promise of my Father upon you;" "*Behold*, I stand at the door and knock!" "*Behold*, angels came and ministered unto Him." The question now recurs, "Why '*Behold*,' in this particular case? Was it really such a wonderful thing that the angels of God should minister to Jesus? When any of her court ministers to our Sovereign, and the fact is narrated by those who make it their work to give to the public the news of the Court, you never find it told in this way, "and, behold, this lord-in-waiting ministered to the Queen!" It is not, therefore, in this fact of the ministration rendered that you must look for the explanation of the word "*behold*." It lies in a totally different direction. The wonder is, that Jesus of Nazareth, the son of the Eternal God, and Himself existing before the earth was,—that He should be in such a place at all; that He, whose high behests angels had hastened to carry out, should be there in the wilderness, hungry, and faint, and forlorn, and standing sorely in need of the ministrations of some one, human or angelic. "Great without controversy is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the

flesh!" It is worth noting here how far the loftiest uninspired genius falls short of the beautiful simplicity of the Word of God. The following is Milton's expansion of the idea of the text —

"Straight a fiery globe
Of angels on full sail of wing flew nigh,
Who on their plummy vans received him soft
From His uneasy station, and upbore
As on a floating couch through the blithe air :
Then, in a flowery valley set Him down
On a green bank, and set before Him spread
A table of celestial food, divine
Ambrosial fruits, fetched from the tree of life,
And from the fount of life, ambrosial drink
That soon refreshed Him, wearied, and repaired
What hunger, (if aught hunger had impaired),
Or thirst ; and, as He fed, angelic choirs
Sung heavenly anthems of his victory—
Over temptation and the tempter proud."

I have quoted this passage at length, to show how the simple truth of scripture looks, when diluted even by the greatest genius, and also to point out, how entirely, as it seems to me, Milton has missed the bearing and reference of this word "Behold," when he makes it point to the angels instead of to Him who was the angels' God, and yet was ministered unto by them.

I. *Let us look at some of the more immediate bearings of the text.*—It has been questioned whether the temptation was real, or merely a vision. Some have regarded it in the same light as they regard the temptation, whereby the obedience of our

first parents was tried, *i.e.*, merely as an allegory. I can perceive no ground in the narrative for regarding it in any light save that of a veritable history. If there be a devil, and a Christ, there is nothing, as it seems to me, more natural than that such an assault as this should be made at the outset of the career of Him who came to free us from the thralldom of the Evil One. As in the days of chivalry, the soldier, before the honour of knight-hood was conferred upon him, was expected to spend in vigils the night preceding his being raised to the new dignity which was to grace his manhood, so *this*, the truest and bravest soldier that ever drew sword in the battle of God against evil, required to spend, in solitary meditation, in fasting, and in prayer, the period which immediately preceded His entrance upon the great work which He had come to do. That is one view of it; another is this—that as He had taken upon Himself our nature, and had come to raise that nature from its hostility to God into the dignity of friendship and sonship, it behoved Him to know by experience the hardships of that temptation which men endure at the hand of him who lies in wait for their destruction. Now, when sore beset by evil, when trembling upon the very verge of yielding, the cry that comes, at times, dangerously near the cry of despair, finds its way to the heart of One who hath Himself suffered, in that He was tempted, and who is able also to succour them that are tempted. I have thought of

the temptation of our Lord in the light of some of those social problems which press themselves upon the consideration of the philanthropist. Some solitary woman, scarce as yet past the flower of her youth, is earning but a scant livelihood by her needle. Even at the best, she can earn a mere pittance; but at the worst, and that has now come upon her in the shape of the entire cessation of work, there is nothing but starvation and death before her. Stay! is there not another way of it? Last night, as she glided along the street, thinly clad, and with hollow cheeks, she passed one of her own sex in fashionable attire, and with a look which said, "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." She knew that the wages by which this gaudy dress, and general plenty of the good things of life, were gained, were the wages of iniquity, of dishonour, of shame. "I would rather die," she says, "than have it thus." Yes! but when death comes a few steps closer, and when his poisonous breath threatens to destroy her young life, the temptation comes back again and yet again, and she stands on a precipice from which one pang more of hunger may hurl her into the dark gulf below. The form of the mother who bore her appears to her in her troubled dreams, but she cannot see her face, only her back, and she says, "Does even my mother turn from me? it will be God next." Springing from her hard pallet, she turns her face upwards to the stars, and to the dark sky, and her heart springs beyond sky and stars,

and with a great and bitter cry, which is almost a shriek, she says, "Christ! Christ! tempted by the devil, help me; tell me how Thou didst beat him off; do Thou, Thyself, again meet him, and say, 'Get thee behind Me, Satan—is not this a brand that I have plucked from the burning?'" And He saves her, and He opens up her way, and says, "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from temptation." It is easy to say, "would it not have served the same purpose for her to have addressed her cry to God?" Certainly not! She came to One who is her Elder Brother; to One who by His possession of human nature could enter into the feeling of her struggle; to One who having Himself been tempted was prepared to succour *her* when tempted and tried.

Observe, also, how skilfully the tempter varies the temptation, suiting it to the physical, or mental peculiarities of those whom he assails. In the case of Christ the assault is of course an entire failure; for, assailed now on this side, now on that, Jesus shows Himself, in each case, master of the position, and converts the brilliant defence into an attack more brilliant still, before which His adversary is, as St Luke says, "forced to leave Him for a season." I can, as it seems to me, perceive the cause of this failure. When the assault is made upon *us*, we have already given indications of where our weakness lies,—indications which serve as a key

to our nature, and which renders the attack not unfrequently successful. With Jesus it was different. That holy human nature which He bare with Him from the Virgin's womb, had given no indication of any open, unprotected point; there had been no momentary forth-flashing of a passion which revealed to such an observer as Satan, possibilities of evil, and therefore he, the tempter, stands as before an unexplored country, and skilful though he be in every art and wile by which innocence may be converted into guilt, has to own himself foiled and baffled. All the same, the methods employed by him in the case of Jesus, give us a clearer insight into the methods employed in the case of those who are less able to resist, and whose weakness is known to the adversary. I find that our Lord is attacked first upon the physical side of His nature; next, ambition, "the last infirmity of noble minds," is appealed to; then avarice, will, it is hoped, be aroused by the promise to give Him all the glory of all the kingdoms of earth. As we know, all these prove utterly abortive. In our case, also, they often prove abortive. The lingering look at some picture in which the nude figure demands for its toleration the legend round our country's arms, "*honi soit qui mal y pense*," is enough to indicate to the watchful tempter the point at which an attack may be most successfully made,—viz., the sensuous, if not the sensual side of our fallen nature. The knowledge that among our progenitors, either dis-

tant or more near, were some who indulged to excess in stimulants, opens the door to the evil hope that in some nook of the physical nature may be lying the spark which may be fanned into the blaze of hell-fire. Here is yet another, a boy, by nature shy and reserved ; one to whom it is an effort to hold communion with any one outside the narrow circle of relationship. Satan, with the quick eye, and the mind so fertile in evil, has marked it in the boy, and he cultivates the seed of this shyness, till it blossoms into distrust of all men, into strange, perverted fancies, and suspicions, till a nature that might have ranked high for intelligence, for knowledge acquired by long study, becomes so perverted as to regard proffered kindness as an insult, and to forswear the common courtesies and the natural kindness of life. I might occupy this sermon with indications of the various methods adopted by the tempter, but it will be more profitable to state in one word how the attack is to be repelled. The sole advice I have to give is—*distrust yourselves, and trust Jesus*. Cast yourselves upon the loving heart that endured temptation, and death for your sake ; place yourselves under the sheltering sweep of that strong arm which eighteen centuries ago smote to the ground the tempter, and which has vanquished not only death, but him that hath the power of death, that is the devil.

As I have already said, I do not know the means by which the angels ministered to Him.

That His body was weak and worn with the forty days' fasting, I cannot doubt; on Him, as on us, hunger told with its depressing power; to Him as to us, thirst meant pain and suffering; to Him, as to us, contest with evil meant a sense of weariness and of fatigue. And that, possibly, is, after all, the main lesson which the narrative is meant to teach, namely, the unquestionable reality of the humanity of Jesus, the fact, that in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, so that we might know that "we have not such an High Priest as cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Instead, therefore, of spending time upon ingenious speculations as to the mode in which the angels ministered unto Jesus, I invite your attention.

II.—*To the fact, that as the angels of God ministered to our Elder Brother, so to us who are the brethren of Jesus, angels still minister.* We have come, in the course of years, to restrict very much the meaning attachable to the word "angel." Originally, the word angel, in this, its Greek form, at least, signified a "messenger" of any sort; and I am not sure but that, all things considered, it would have been as well to have retained, in every case, that rendering, leaving it to be determined by the context what the nature of the messenger was. The messengers of God are all around us; their breath fans us in the summer breeze, they smile

upon us in the sunshine, and they speak in the thunder, in the earthquake, and in the storm. "He maketh His angels wind, and His ministers a flame of fire." Literally, "the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels, the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in His holy place." I do not wish you, however, to understand that God does not even now, as of old, send comfort, and help, and loving service to His sons on earth, by means of those pure and holy messengers who stand in His presence, and laud Him for ever and ever. It is with me a settled point, that the word of God gives us no ground to believe that the ministration of angels to the heirs of salvation ceased with the time of the apostles. You may possibly say, "If you could tell us *how* they minister, that would be of more practical interest and value than the mere assertion that they do so." My answer to that would be, that although I may be ignorant of the various processes by which my natural body is built up, or of how it is strengthened and upheld, it may be wrong to infer that any of these various processes could be wanting, or could be withdrawn for a time, without danger to the whole system; so, this body of Christ (His church), may be built up by means of angelic ministrations in a way not clearly intelligible to me, and yet none the less real on that account. There may be dangers, not only to our physical, but also to our moral nature, from which we are delivered by the ministrations of those who

fly swiftly to perform the behests of God. The old Greeks seem to have had a glimmering perception of this great truth. The pages of Homer's great Epic abound in illustrations of deliverance effected by the interposition of guardian goddesses for their favourite warriors. That, of course, we cannot believe. But in the great battle of life, attacked by temptation, assailed by sorrow, and by trial, so pressed by the foe that we are faint, and not pursuing, but pursued, He, whose we are, and whom we serve, sends, as was sent to Himself of old, one of the bright band that stands before His throne on high, and so interposes between His brother and the evils that bay and howl around his path like a pack of hungry wolves.

It would be an error to suppose that God had, with this one special form of aid, exhausted all the means which He has of ministering to His children on earth. I have been thinking much during the past summer of FLOWERS as angels of God, sent by Jesus, to comfort those who are weary, and those that are fainting under temptation. I cannot, of course, speak of the forms assumed by these angels to whom I have already referred, because my vision is too dim, and my senses too gross to discern them, but I can speak of the beauty and loveliness of those *other* angels of God, and I know of cases in which Christ has sent them to minister to the tried. We are apt to forget, in the blaze of modern enterprise and discovery, the earlier pioneers of African ex-

ploration, who went forth like that eastern sheik of old, "not knowing whither they went." Among them stands the name of a countryman of our own : I refer to Mungo Park, To him it happened to have a visit from an angel of God at a time when he sorely needed help ; at a moment such as comes even to the bravest heart, and flesh utterly failed. Without provisions, without water, far from help, in the great, lone desert, he thought within himself, as he fell in utter weakness upon the arid sand, "I can do no more ; my work is surely finished, and now, it only remains to die." As if his Elder Brother had said, "It is vain to send to Mungo Park a messenger who, in the bright flashing of his descent from before the throne, would cause the sun to pale his ineffectual fires—I will send him another of my angels." Look high, look low, where is he ? "There !" you say : "We cannot see him." O, fools, and slow of heart to believe ! The dying traveller in the desert has seen Him, and has risen with a new life, and a new hope, as his eyes has fallen upon a little tiny flower, and as his heart has grasped at the thought, "is God giving nutriment to this flower in the wilderness, and will he not much more feed me, and care for me, and give me a safe through-bearing ?" You may, perhaps, say, "that does admirably for the *raconteur* ; and one who has a talent for lifting little things out of the commonplace, may make much of it ; but, things of that kind do not occur, save only once in a while." Let

me assure you that they take place oftener than you think. High up in some of these tall, grim houses which look down upon the public square in which many of God's dear saints won, 200 years ago, the crown of martyrdom, there is a boy of some ten or eleven years, with a pale, pinched face, the only beautiful thing about which is the large limpid eye, round as that of a golden plover. And the days are wearisome for him, and the nights are more wearisome still. A light step presses upon the narrow stair, and the door is opened softly, by one who stands within the squalid room like a sunbeam that has lost its way. She lays upon the pillow of the dying child a rosebud, *only* a little rosebud, and, thinking it a shame if she should disturb, by a single word, the troubled sleeper, she silently, as a sunbeam would, withdraws. A few minutes more, and the slight dose is over, and as he turns his head, he sees the little gift of love, and wonders if Jesus has been in the room, and has gone away leaving this angel with him, to cheer him in his lonely hours. As he turns it over and over in his mind, a verse which he read one day in the school about the man Jesus presents itself to his thoughts—"And, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

Speaking of CHILDREN, I am reminded that the Master not unfrequently makes them ministering messengers to His brethren on earth. There is something very interesting in the thought, that while Jesus employs these little ones as His mes-

sengers, *their* angels do always behold the face of His father who is in heaven. You have thus a double connection, and a double line of thought, *i.e.*, children ministering to those on earth, who shall be heirs of salvation; and the same children being themselves ministered to by those who ministered of old to Jesus. It is from the former, and not from the latter point of view that I wish to contemplate this question. I have often enjoyed the simple ingenuousness of a little child, acting for the time as God's messenger. Human angels of a larger growth sometimes go about their work after a very stately fashion; their words may be well chosen, but they are not few. With child-angels there is a going directly to the point: there is not about them the slightest suspicion of what, for lack of a better word, you will permit me to call "angel-officialism;" on the contrary, they know nothing of officialism. They act as God's angels, and they know it not. They do it, not as we lumbering angels do it, that is, with a solemn countenance, and a heavy step; *they* do it with a smile of which death itself, as I can testify, cannot rob them. There is about them a certain nimbleness of motion that gets within the guard of reserve, and pride, and enmity. Here, for instance, is a problem in spiritual forces. Given, one of those ill-looking convicts who bear on their countenance the stolid look of a nature that is more than half animal, and who has lurking in his eye the red light that gleams, at times, in the eye of an angry bull,—

the problem is, how so to smite the rock that the waters of a true penitence shall flow forth? Here is *your* answer to the question. Place him in the hands of the prison chaplain, let that respectable angel tell him about the heinous sin of which he has been guilty in breaking some lock-fast place, and abstracting bank notes and jewels, and silver plate; let him tell him how the wrath of God abides upon him, and all such people, and that he ought to feel thankful that the human law is changed now, for, not so long since, he would have paid the penalty of such misdeeds with his life. That is *your* solution; and, now, let me set before you God's. This convict of whom I speak, is standing upon a railway platform, with the scowl of a sullen anger on his countenance, and with heavy manacles on his wrists. You can see that he is precisely in the mood to echo the words of Nero, "O that the human race had but one head, so that I might strike it off at a blow." In fact, he is at his very worst, for he resents the impertinent curiosity of the loungers who steal furtive glances at him as they pass. Suddenly, a light touch is laid upon his heavy hand, and looking down he sees a child-face, and the eyes of it are like violets after a heavy shower. With a look of love, such as none but God can put into a child's countenance, she says, "Jesus is sorry for you, Jesus loves you!" Ah! God has done the work by means of His angel, and the walls of the man's devilish hatred are levelled with the ground,

and the red fire vanishes from his eye, and the scowl from his face, as he thinks, that is what my mother told me years ago, "Jesus loves me!" He carries with him, through the prison gates, this glorious truth, and, along with it, the resemblance of the face of God's angel, who did for him what a legion of judges, and of prison chaplains, and prison governors could not have done. Verily, when I see them (God's angels), going upon their messages of love, my heart breaks forth into singing, and this is the song which it sings—How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring good tidings, that publish peace, that bring good tidings of good, that publish salvation. Break forth into joy, sing together, for the Lord hath comforted His people.

As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "Time would fail me to tell of all the messengers whom Christ employs; to tell of ministrations of love which are written in the book of God's remembrance; to tell of those who visit the sick, of those who comfort the dying, of those who minister to souls which, but for their ministrations, must have sunk into everlasting darkness; of those who succour the tempted.

Perhaps some one says, "according to your reading of the text, *all* angels are beautiful." Those that come from before the throne of God are compared to the most beautiful object in nature; and what is that? It is the *morning*, they are the "stars

of *morning*;" flowers, and children, and fair women, and saintly men are *all* beautiful. But God has messengers that do not generally rank among the beautiful, and yet they do their work quite as well as the others. HUNGER, as I take it, is not a beautiful thing. There was once placed in my hand the photographed picture of half-a-dozen natives of India, belonging to a district which had suffered terribly from one of those famines which periodically affect that country. The pinched features, the ribs showing themselves with fearful distinctness, the eyes so sunken as if it seemed that all the light that was ever in them had gone out—made a picture never to be forgotten. And yet it was HUNGER that God employed to bring back the youth that wandered far from happiness and from home. "There arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be *in want*;" and when he came to himself, he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and *I* perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father." Terribly grim are some of these messengers, these angels of God. Here is a young man who has come fresh from his mother's kisses and prayers, to qualify himself for one of the noblest professions which I know—the practice of the healing art. He falls, after a little time, into a bad set—a roystering, theatre-haunting, billiard playing, and bar-lounging set, from whom no good can come either to body or soul. But there is worse behind. "At the window

of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding." Just when trembling upon the verge of a sin, which pollutes so terribly the temple of God, he has come in his daily visits to the hospital upon a poor victim of sensual excess, "who mourns at last, and whose flesh, and whose bones are consumed." That poor dying wretch is far from being a pleasant sight, and yet, to the young man void of understanding, he is an angel of God. His mother fearing danger, may in her quiet country home be praying that the Lord would send forth His angel to minister to him, and she little dreams where, and who the angel is. One of the plainest men to look at, whom you might chance to meet in a long day's journey, was an angel of God who ministered in the Gospel for many years in Glasgow—the late Rev. Dr W. Anderson—and with all his plainness of feature what an angel he was! Passing along Jamaica Street, in Glasgow, he saw a simple-looking lad being enticed by a woman into one of those dens of vice which are redolent of death. Raising his voice to its full pitch, he shouted, "Young man, you are going into the jaws of hell; come back, for your mother's sake, for Christ's sake, come back!" Was not that an angel for you? Yes!

"We found the lost child in a little shed
Where they shut up the lambs at night."

* * * * *

“How did he get thar?” “Angels,
He could never have walked in that storm,
They jest scooped down and totted him
To where it was safe and warm,
And, I think, that saving a little child,
And bringing him to his own,
Is a great sight better business
Than loafing around the Throne.”

QUIES IN DEO.

“O, thou, my soul, do thou return
Unto thy quiet rest,
For largely, lo, the Lord to thee
His bounty hath expressed!”

Scottish Metrical Version of the Psalms.

PSALM xxxvii. 7.—“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.”

ONE of the old Nonconformist divines wrote a book, which some of you may have seen and read. He entitled it “The Whole Duty of Man.” So far as my recollection of the work goes, it does not err on the side of undue length; and yet, taking into account the great importance of the subject, and the well-known tendency of these old writers to extend their remarks unduly, you might have expected a treatise as extensive as Caryl on Job, or Durham on the Ten Commandments. Brief, however, as the “Whole Duty of Man” is, it is outdone in this quality by more than one portion of the sacred volume, in which the subject is discussed in as many sentences as others have employed hundreds of pages. We shall listen to the Great Teacher first of all. “Master,” said one unto Him, “which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said unto him, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” I wish you next to listen to the whole duty of man as presented by one who had obtained the highest reputation for wisdom. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” And, last of all, I wish you to hear the opinion of the father of him whose words I have just quoted. Here, in the Psalm from which I have selected the words of my text, stands the fourfold duty of man. 1. “Trust in Jehovah and do good. 2. Delight thyself in Jehovah. 3. Commit thy way unto Jehovah. 4. Rest in the Lord, and patiently wait for Him.” Look at each of them for one moment. “Trust in the Lord, and do good :” that is, have the strong confidence in God that will enable you to face and to overcome all difficulties in well-doing. It is the New Testament formula of James and Paul combined. “Faith without works is dead ; not the hearers of the law are justified before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” Then, “Delight thyself in the Lord ;” that is, make God the great fountain of your gladness. I transfer from Christ to God the words of the hymn—

“O Christ, he is the fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love,
The streams on earth I’ve tasted,
More full I’ll drink above.”

All our well springs are in Him. He that makes

God the fountain of his joy and delight, drinks of a stream that can never dry up. Then, "Commit thy way unto the Lord." Literally,—“roll thy way upon the Lord.” The very motion by which the burden is transferred from us to God is most suggestive. This is much too heavy a thing for us to “cast upon the Lord,” for in order to cast a thing you must first lift it. In utter weariness and helplessness we can only move the burden by rolling it along—rolling it on towards Him who is the great burden bearer.

“Art thou weary, art thou languid,
Art thou sore distressed?
Come to me, saith One,
And coming, be at rest.”

And then come in the words of my text: “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.”

I.—*These words take up the duty of man at the point where God is everything and man is nothing.* “Rest,” “wait.” Some one has defined rest to consist in a change of occupation. The mind, for instance, that feels wearied by the long continued and ardent prosecution of some particular train of thought, gains rest by turning away from the one subject to some other. One set of muscles in the human frame has a feeling of rest if the tension be removed to another set. But however curious this experience of rest may be, whether as a psychological or physiological fact, it is not the kind of rest to which the Psalmist here refers. Here, the word suggests that all has

been done by you that can be done ; that you have toiled and wrought, and agonised, and all in vain ; that you have risen early and sat up late, eating the bread of sorrow, and drinking the water of affliction, and nothing has come of it but more sorrow, and more trouble, and more toil ; that nothing remains for you now but simply to cast yourself, panting and breathless, and, I do not know an English word that will quite bring out what I mean, so excuse me if I employ one which is purely Scotch, *FORFOCHTEN* into the arms of God. I see in the form of expression as employed by the Psalmist more, much more than is apparent to the merely casual onlooker. *REST IN THE LORD*, is, to my thinking, something different from resting *on* the Lord. You cast your poor storm-worn humanity into the being of God ; you become, as it were, absorbed in the great, calm ocean of the Divine ; your prayer is heard, “ O to be nothing, nothing ! ” God becomes all and in all, and though you do not lose your conscious identity, though the Pantheism that makes all to be God, is as abhorrent to your feeling as it is unphilosophical and untrue, yet you feel that to rest *IN* God is a higher and more peaceful thing than even to rest *ON* God. Then, in the highest sense, you become a partaker of the divine nature ; the throbbing of the great heart of God, and the feebler pulse of your will, and of your affection, keep time with each other, and the sweet whispers of His love falls upon the listening ear—“ O, thou afflicted, tossed

with tempest, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires." Your heart has ceased its fluttering, and begins to beat with calm, steady stroke, saying, as said your Elder Brother within the veil, "Not my will, Father, but Thine be done." You feel just as did the little bird pointed out by Luther to his son—you are simply content to let God "think for you;" yes, and speak for you, and act for you; in a word, for God to be everything, and you nothing. To some it may appear as if this were merely the system of the German Tauler, or of the French Madam Guyon, a system known as mysticism. I certainly regard that system as having in it many admirable points, but the main defect lies in the endeavour to make it a life, to make "rest" and "waiting" the normal aspect of the Christian character. Now if I understand the Psalmist's expression, "Rest in the Lord," I hold him to point to rest taken after exertion, and in the prospect of resuming work. It is this conscious *rest* in God that furnishes the spiritual force needed for the warfare and the work in which we are engaged; we come forth after the sweet repose armed with the might of God, our countenance, like that of Moses, shines after the intercourse and communion which we hold with Him who dwells between the cherubim, and patient waiting is the best preparation for the active working. When the stream threatens to become dry, when we feel that the burning heat of trial or of toil

is drying up the waters, there is nothing for it, but to come back again and again to the fountain, that "we may be filled with all the fulness of God,"—an expression, this, which I should scarcely have dared to use, had it not first been used by one who wrote and spoke under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

II.—The words of my text form an answer to three exclamations which come oftentimes from the heart of man.

1. "HOW DARK IT IS!"—"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Nothing so teaches us the weakness and the limited nature of the human intellect as the existence of so much in every department of the working of God, which transcends our comprehension. One thing I have noted in this connection, namely, that these mysteries do not become fewer in number, or less dark, as we advance in our earthly pilgrimage. A young man, for instance, is very difficult to persuade that mysteries exist in the moral government of God. I can look back upon a ministry of thirty years, and I could mention a great many points upon which I had no doubt at the beginning of my ministry, which appear to me now in a considerably different light. I am not sure that I can solve the great questions that force themselves upon me in reference to the divine foreknowledge, and the freedom of the human will. I am not so clear as I used to be upon the fate of the heathen. In regard to these and

many other points, I feel much more inclined than I did to rest in the Lord, and to wait patiently. The longer I live, I feel more and more the darkness that gathers round the existence of sin in the world, and the misery which flows from it. I begin sometimes to say, "if I had the making of a world I would see to it that nothing that worketh abomination, or that loveth a lie would have existence in it;" and I have scarce got the words out of my lips when there falls upon me, as there fell upon one, three thousand years ago, the horror of a great darkness, and in the darkness a spirit passes before my face, and out of the silence I hear a voice saying, "Shall mortal man be more just than God, shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" and I with my fancied world-making, and world-peopling, am fain now to stretch out my feeble hands to God, and say, "O let me rest from these maddening thoughts in THEE, I will wait patiently for thee."

But some one says "resting in God is not light." It may be, or it may not be. God may, in the quiet that comes from resting in Him, give us light upon many dark and mysterious topics, which we could not get amidst the din of controversy, or the darkness begotten of our own selfishness. He may deal with us as he dealt with Asaph. That old Hebrew singer, with the outspokenness of a man who does not wish to conceal his folly, declares that he became so perplexed, and his mind so covered with darkness in reference to the prosperity of the wicked, that he

actually questioned if there was any God, or, if God existed, if there was any knowledge in Him. He was, in fact, upon the very borderland of atheism, when he drew near to God, and then the light came. But, even though you *are* resting in God, light may *not* come. What then? I hold REST to be better than light. The little child wandering in the dark night cries for his father's hand, cries for the father's arm. At last his tiny, feeble fingers touch the hand that is strong, and round him he feels an arm that is powerful, and anon he sobs himself to sleep upon the father's bosom, and when he wakens and finds that it is still dark he does not say to the father, Make the darkness depart, he only creeps closer to his father's heart, and says, "Come light or darkness, it is all one now, I am resting in my father's bosom." So with us, it does not much matter though we know neither now nor hereafter some of those mysterious things that have exercised our faith here on earth. I would rather "rest in the Lord," and leave it to Him to reveal or to conceal as He may think best. For what is this "resting in the Lord," but simply loving him supremely? Fear is unrest; perfect love casteth out fear, that is, casteth out unrest; that is, perfect love is perfect rest in God. If this be so, it throws a clear light upon a remarkable passage in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, "Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not LOVE I am nothing," In either case, then, resting

in God means peace to the soul that is troubled and perplexed by the mysteries of His government, or of His spiritual kingdom, of His providence, or of His grace. It is mainly in connection with the former that the cry rises from the heart of man, "How dark it is!"—the reason for this being, that much the smaller proportion of men occupy their thoughts with the affairs of the kingdom of grace, whilst almost every man is forced to turn his attention to, or at least to become cognisant of the other. Here, for instance, is a home in which from year's end to year's end trouble and affliction keep falling, sometimes on the heads of the family, sometimes upon the children; there, on the other hand, is a home in which affliction is a stranger, and the longest summer day seems too short for expressing, in mirth and in amusement, the buoyancy of spirits which uninterrupted health gives. Is it strange that from the first-mentioned of these the cry should rise for light, for a revelation of the mystery of God's working, or that the restless, unsatisfied heart should be like a caged bird dashing itself against the bars of its prison? It may take months, it may take years to arrive at the Psalmist's conclusion, but such is the conclusion that must be arrived at before either light or peace can come to the troubled soul, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

II. "HOW HARD IT IS!" "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." In some cases the ex-

clamation rises out of the fact that he who utters it has not counted the cost of the position which he has taken up as professing to be a son of God. He had heard a saying of Christ, "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me." But he did not expect that this cross-bearing was to be such a practical thing as it seems to be. It looked well as translated into poetry, or placed upon the canvass of the painter, or as it adorned the discourse of some eloquent preacher, but when the poetry and the eloquence were stripped from it, there remained in its most prosaic repulsiveness that which Jesus bore, and which you and I must bear if we are Christ's disciples indeed. Brought face to face with a burden on which we did not calculate, we are very apt to cry out, "How hard it is!" God's answer to the cry uttered in such circumstances is not "REST," but "wait patiently," "go on bearing the burden! When it has become heavier still, then we will speak together of Rest, of Rest in myself." But, unquestionably, there *are* times when the burden is not only felt to be hard, but is really so. If you take the Great Burden-bearer you will find the most powerful illustration of how, when the burden becomes intolerable, relief comes by resting in God. To Him, the load of human sin was so heavy that he was bowed to the dust; upon His lips trembled the prayer, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," He sweat, in the midst of an anguish which words cannot tell, great drops of

blood falling down to the ground, nor did the feeling of the unbearableness of the load leave him till he said—"Father, not my will, but Thine be done." The holy human soul of the Redeemer finds rest in God—rest and strength—till at last the cross is changed for the crown. It is well to mark that the souls of His brethren can nowhere find rest from the pain and agony of the Cross, save where the Elder Brother found it. We are apt to overlook this, and in doing so we have our reward. Some commonplace words of comfort, some hackneyed platitudes about submission, some comparison between what others have suffered, and what we are suffering, some recommendations to rest content in the thought that hard as the burden is, it might have been harder still—that is all, and we find that in them is no true, abiding rest. Such attempts at comfort are impertinence to the stricken soul. The only true rest is in God. I find the explanation of this contained in a passage in Hosea, where Jehovah, addressing Israel, says—"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, I will bring her into the wilderness, I will speak comfortably to her;" literally, "I will speak to her heart." That is the one thing that is needed. The burden lies on the heart; the burden of bereavement, the burden of disappointment, the burden that causes the cry "from lying lips, and guileful tongue, O Lord, my soul set free." The words spoken by man do not touch the heart,—not,

at least, so as to remove the burden. The words of the Lord find their way to the heart direct.

“To the Lord bring all your burden;
Put the promise to the test.
Hear Him say—Your burden-bearer,
Come unto me and rest.”

Still the tried heart says—“HOW HARD it is to wait.” Yes! I know, waiting is a hard thing, but you would be astonished if you knew in how many cases waiting has gained the battle, when working would only have provoked disaster and defeat. In that great battle which, in the beginning of this century, gained for Europe freedom from the ambitious projects of the first Napoleon, it stands upon record that one of our Highland regiments held their ground hour after hour under the deadly fire of the enemy. The cannon balls ploughed their way through the ranks. The splendid cavalry of France dashed themselves against a wall of living granite, and recoiled each time from the bristling steel and the deadly volley. The Emperor, whose tenure of power depended upon breaking up the compact array, was heard to exclaim, “These soldiers seem rooted to the ground!” No! it was not a case of being rooted to the ground, as was seen a few hours afterwards when the word of command was given, “Charge;” it was simply a case of waiting, of waiting patiently, and often as look and voice besought the British Commander to order the advance, the reply was, “Wait, maintain

your position, everything depends upon your standing still." So, in the great battle of life, in the battle with our spiritual foes without and within, the "staying power" is of equal, nay, in some circumstances, of greater value than the fighting power. True! the eloquence of the orator, and the genius of the poet laud and glorify the swift rush and the brilliant charge; the blood in the veins seems to keep pace with the fierce turmoil that goes on in the valley of death; and as the shattered remnant emerges from the smoke and the din of the conflict, the heart, stirred by the sight, echoes the words—

"When can their glory fade,
O, the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made,
Honour the light brigade,
Noble Six Hundred!"

But, after all, "the charge they made" was neither as strong, nor as valuable, nor as successful as the "waiting" to which I have referred. There are many things which you and I have to learn in regard to the divine life, but possibly this is the one thing in regard to which we have most to learn—that "waiting" is a higher achievement than "working," and that "resting in the Lord" is the only way by which the heavy burdens of this life can be lightened and removed.

III.—"HOW LONG IT IS!"—"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." It was in this direc-

tion mainly that the temptation to distrust God, and to grow weary of waiting was felt by the Psalmist. When the prophet anointed him for the throne and for the crown there was no time fixed at which the youthful shepherd should lay aside the crook and assume the sceptre. Months passed, and years passed, and still no throne for him, no shouts from the gathered thousands of Israel, "O King, live for ever!" If you suppose that the prophet's designation of David to the royal crown became at last well-known, there would not be wanting men who, knowing that he was hunted as a partridge upon the moors, would laugh to scorn his pretensions. "They that sit in the gate," He says, "speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards." Then came the prayer, "Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up;" then came the fleeing for refuge to the Rock that was higher than he, the resting in the Lord, and waiting patiently for Him. From many a weary heart since the time of David has come the cry, "How long!" Even now, from under the altar, the souls of them that have been slain for the testimony of Jesus, cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth!" Even now, from them that have borne for years a burden that none but God and themselves know, who are passing through trials which seem in their fierce tempestuousness as if they would overwhelm them; even now, from them that have

been puzzling themselves over mysteries for the sounding of which the line of their own reason is much too short, the cry is rising into the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth, "How long, O Lord, how long?" From the most excellent glory comes no other answer than this, "Rest in the Lord, and patiently wait for Him." I grant you that there is one thing which makes it hard to wait and to rest. God's measurement of time is different from ours. To us, a thousand years seem as if they were interminable, to God it is but as a day. A thousand years! Who was reigning in England a thousand years ago? Probably few can tell; and you plead on behalf of your ignorance that it is so *long* since. To us, the span of whose existence is bounded by some three score years and ten, it appears a long time since Alfred the Great ruled over England, but what is it to Him with whom a thousand years are as one day. It was a thousand years between the time of David and the advent of Christ. Think how many of the godly in Israel had fallen upon sleep during these ten centuries—all of them entering on life with the hope that they might possibly behold the Lord's anointed, and all of them passing away with some such words as these, "I shall see Him but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh." Is it strange they should say, "How long, O Lord, how long?" It was four thousand years between the primal promise, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's

head," and the angels' song over the plains of Bethlehem, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord!" Four thousand years in the computation of man—as four days in the computation of the Eternal. I do not know any department of Christian experience in which the spirit that can wait and rest in the Lord is more necessary than in WORK FOR GOD! We, with our impatient, fervid hearts: we who are so apt to think and speak as if all time were embraced by our three score years, we have no sooner done some piece of work than we commence crying out, "How long!" Now, we must teach ourselves to wait, and to rest in the Lord. *His* great purpose stretches far beyond our work; *our* work may be but an infinitesimally small portion of the work of God, which may require centuries, or milleniums for its accomplishment. His work is so great, so vast, so broad, and hence it takes in ages on ages. Happy they whose eyes shall behold the consummation of the work of God! But happier they who, having done some small part of that work, have had the faith and the love that prompted them to rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. The time will come for such, when the angels of God, and those of our race whom we leave behind us, shall say, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

ARABIA DESERTA.

Ehen! vita, mors vocanda,
Odienda non amanda,
Cum in te sint nulla bona,
Cur exspecto tua dona?

Vita mundi, res mœbosa
Magis fragilis quam rosa
Cum sis tota lacrymosa,
Cur es mihi gratiosa?

Vita mundi, res laboris,
Anxia, plena timoris
Cum sis semper in languore,
Cur pro te sum in dolore?

Author unknown, 12th century.

PSALM cvii.—“They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. *Then* they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.”

THE Psalm from which I have selected this text stands as the first in the fifth, or last division of the Hebrew Psalter. Each of the divisions which precedes it concludes with a doxology, appended very probably by the individual who collected the various poems which compose the book. You will find these doxologies at the close of the 41st, 72nd, 89th and 106th Psalms. As the starting point for a new division, what could have been more becoming than

the commemoration of the providential goodness of Jehovah to the sons of men ; placed, as they oftentimes are, in circumstances of great peril ? There are four distinct groups, marked off in each case by the recurrence of the words : “ O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men ! ” First, come the wanderers in the desert, well-nigh overcome by hunger and thirst ; but they are brought by the good hand of Jehovah to a city of habitation. Next are the prisoners, who have rebelled, and who have contemned God ; them, too, He brings out of darkness, and the shadow of death, and breaks their bands in sunder. Next are those in sickness,—sinful men who have, by their waywardness and folly, brought trouble upon themselves ; but the Lord heals them and delivers them from their destructions. Last of all, come the sea-farers ; and, here, the graphic character of the description, the word painting of the fierce tempest, and of the wild commotion of the waves, amply justify one who is regarded as himself a master of style and of criticism (I refer to Addison), in saying, that “ he prefers this description of a ship in a storm to any others which he had ever met with.” Jehovah, whom the Psalmist lauds, changes the storm into a calm ; frees the heart of the poor sailors from terror, and brings them to the haven which they desired to see. “ O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness ! ” It is with the first of these four groups that the words of my text

lead me to deal, the ransomed wanderer. I propose to myself the following division of the verses, I.—The low estate of Jehovah's redeemed, previous to their redemption. II.—The word that marks the turning point between man's extremity and God's opportunity. III.—The good gifts of God to His redeemed.

I. Considerable diversity of opinion exists as to the reference of the words before us. By some they have been applied to the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt, and to the forty years wandering in the wilderness, together with the rest secured for them by the possession of Canaan. By others, again, they have been applied to the return of the Jews from exile, and to the regaining of Jerusalem, the city of their fathers,—“the vision of peace.” There are, however, expressions in the verses which cannot by any straining of the meaning apply to either. As it appears to me, we are safe to apply the passage to the more general aspect of the providence of God, as exercised towards those who, in passing through the wilderness, had encountered the privations and dangers which led to the cry that God would deliver them—a cry which was heard by Him who bends His ear to hear the cry of the poor, and of the needy. In this way we bring the illustration of the providential goodness of God into harmony with the other three which preceded, and which do not refer to any special historical circumstances, but to the varying circumstances in which

men are brought to know that God is good, and that His mercy endureth for ever. The mode of expression in reference to those who are delivered, leads me to embrace in my treatment of the passage, a wider range than the providential interposition of God for the deliverance of the sons of men. They are the "redeemed of Jehovah," and as such I wish you to mark their low estate previously to their redemption. They were "wanderers"—"wanderers in a solitary way;" "hungry, and thirsty, and faint." One can scarcely imagine a position more entirely calling for pity, or one in which the danger is so extreme. When I look at it, I begin to wonder if the Lord of Life found in these two verses the germ of that pearl of parables with which the name of the prodigal son is identified. He took his journey into a far country. At first, he would have spurned the idea that this far country was a wilderness; if it be so, he will, at least, find it out for himself. "A wilderness! There never was a greater mistake; there is here plenty and to spare, and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. In one respect, the old Hebrew psalmist was decidedly in error, he spoke of this being 'a *solitary* way.' Certes, there is great abundance of brave, goodly company. They and he for it, there will be no end to this fellowship." I wonder when it first began to dawn upon him that he was making fast for the wilderness, if not already in it. As he passes through the far country, he finds the soil partaking

more and more arid, and the green meadows, and flowing streams are certainly not so many as they were at first, and his foot strikes against something that sends a momentary fear into his heart ; it is the skull of some one who seems to have fallen at the entrance to the wilderness, and when he hopes to laugh it off with some of those boon companions who had made the far country so pleasant at first, he finds that he stands alone, all alone—in a sense not even God is there, at least so far as his feeling and experience go, it is as if there were no God at all. O the solitariness of it ! Was it true, or was it false, that which the Psalmist said, “they wander in the wilderness in a solitary way !” That, then, is the first scene in this startling drama of the wilderness-life. And now for the second :—“Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.” “And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want . . . and no man gave unto him.” Men are slow to learn, that in the wilderness there is no water, that in the wilderness there grow no fertile crops, from which life-sustaining bread can come. And yet the testimony of those who have come safe out of it, by the goodness of a God whose mercy endureth for ever, is unanimously to this effect, “we were dying in the great, lone land of sin, in the arid wilderness with its expanse of sand.” And the testimony of the wilderness itself is—“I am the sworn foe of life.” The hot blast of the simoon sweeps over it ; the

burning heat of all evil passions rages, and makes life so unbearable, that often on the night winds are borne to the ears of those who have come out alive, the words, "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life." We say such and such a picture is true to the *life*. This picture by the Psalmist, and that by Jesus of Nazareth are true to the *DEATH*—for sin means death. It means a soul deprived of its true nutriment, deprived of the bread of life, and of the water of life; a soul drifting on to perdition, with but one will in all the universe strong enough to turn back the deadly power that presses upon the heart; with but one arm strong enough to lead the dying one out of the wilderness into the liberty, and the joy and peace, and plenty of a son of God.

II. *The one word that marks the turning point between man's extremity, and God's opportunity—"THEN."*—Even although this word had been employed in the single case before us, it would have been sufficiently noteworthy to have called for more than a mere cursory remark. But when you find it four times repeated, and always at the same point, you may rest assured that the spirit of God did not intend that it should occupy a secondary position. It is in fact the key-word of the Psalm—the transition word between the old and the new. "Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them, *THEN* they cried unto the Lord." It is a very sad confession to make, but it must be made all the same; a great number of those who are brought to God, are

driven, rather than drawn ; driven by affliction, not drawn by love. Of course, the great thing is to be brought to God, but it were to be desired that it should be through the perception of His goodness, rather than through the fear engendered by His rod. Our attention is specially called by the Psalmist to the fact that it is only when *in extremis*, so to speak, only when there is but a step between them and death, that the soul raises its cry for deliverance, "their soul fainted in them, THEN ;" "there was none to help, THEN ;" "they draw near to the gates of death, THEN ;" "they are at their wit's end, THEN." That this extremity of weakness, and of peril, should find God willing to be gracious, is one of the most wonderful things in the history of a man's redemption. He has so often pressed it upon us the fact that we are in the way that leads to destruction ; and we have tried every way of it, before we tried this way, that it were nothing wonderful if God should say—You have made *Me* the *last* resource. "I will, therefore, laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." Blessed be God, it has not quite come to that with us. Though we have set at nought all His counsel, though we would have none of His rebuke, still, His voice to us is, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee, I will deliver thee from all thy distresses." The parallel between the words of the Psalmist, and Christ's parable is still carried out. When the poor prodigal returned foot-sore and weary, haggard, and

all but naked, the Father does not rebuke him with the past, does not say—"Did I not tell you before you left, that you would land in the wilderness? Did I not warn you against the company of the profane, and of the mockers, and of them that waste their substance in riotous living?" Nothing of all this; when he saw him he had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him, and said—"This my son that was lost is found, that was dead is alive again."

As my text looks more at the providential than at the redemptive acting of Jehovah, let me remind you of a fact which some of us here may have had experience of, and which many more of us have seen, namely—that in the trials of this present life, we are oftentimes made to understand the force of this "THEN." We are, I shall suppose, in the midst of the battle of life, and we have started with the theory that we are in our own manhood sufficient unto ourselves. We will be brave with the bravest, and the world shall own in us a master. Alas! and alas! When the burden and the heat of the day have come, what poor creatures we are! How the wave of battle, on whose crest we thought we should ride so triumphantly, drags us under, and with one despairing cry, we sink beneath its cold darkness. THEN, we cry unto the Lord, and he saves us from our distresses; and the first cry of the saved man is, "Lord, I am weak, but thou art strong, I praise thee, O Lord, for thy

goodness, and for thy wonderful work done unto me!" It is a wholesome "THEN," this of the Psalmist. But for its being so long in coming, coming just as we were about to give up, we should have either gone on with the foolish idea of our own power, or have fallen into the depth of destruction. There is a sense in which the proverb, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity," is far from creditable to man. Why leave it to the extremity? Why not have called God long before, and have had Him as a rock and dwelling place to which we may ever resort? But as I have said, though discreditable to us, it is glorifying to God, and in coming to our help either when all others have forsaken us, or when there is found to be in them no power to help, He establishes, if I may so say, a double claim upon our love, and binds us to Him with more than the cords of a man, even with bonds no power on earth or in hell can ever break, the bonds of a gratitude which finds expression in the words—"He hath remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endureth for ever: He hath redeemed us from our enemies, for His mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven, for His mercy endureth for ever,"

III.—*The good gifts of God to His redeemed.*—These, as brought out in the text, are threefold, namely—"deliverance," "guidance," "rest." Of the first, I do not mean to speak in this discourse, simply of the second and third.

I. Guidance—"He led them forth by the right way." God now takes the matter into His own hand. We have proved ourselves so incompetent that there is nothing for it save to leave it to Him, and He throws aside *our* ideas of what a way should be, and takes His own. *We* are great for a *smooth* way; we do not care so much about the rightness of it, give us smoothness—no rocks in the path, no thorns, nothing less would serve us, if we had our own way of it, save a smooth lawn; we would become very Sybarites in course of time, and moan over a rose leaf which should detract from the uniform smoothness. God says, "No! this smoothness had gone well nigh to ruin you in the past, and you must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom." All who have found the city of habitation have had a rough way for a considerable part of their journey. From a sort of journal kept by one who had been a wanderer, but who was marvelously brought back, you may gather something of the roughness of the way. "Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep." And yet it seems that the roughness of the way did not terrify him, for he says in a letter which he wrote, after the one from which I have quoted, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." I have observed

that not unfrequently in the case of God's redeemed, the roughness of the way becomes less as they are drawing nearer to the end of their pilgrimage; either that, or they have become more accustomed to it, and accept it not as the inevitable, but as the expression not only of an infinite wisdom, but also of an infinite love.

One, I find, will, when upon a journey, feel the length of it less when the way is known to him, than when it is altogether unknown. Now, this way by which God leads forth His redeemed *is not a way that is known to them*. The reason of this, I take to be, that under the new arrangements which follow upon God having delivered them from their troubles and their distresses, it is necessary that their faith in Him should be put to the proof. It was want of faith which led to all the miseries of the past. "Now," He says, "you have placed yourselves in My hands; it is not, therefore, necessary that *you* should know the way. *I* know it, and that is enough. If you cannot trust Me for this, you cannot trust Me at all. I find that at the initial stage of the leading forth, this must be considered as a settled point. When Jehovah called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, it was in this way that He presented to him the entering upon pilgrimage which was to shape the destiny of the world for all coming years: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." Mark the

difference of the tenses; when it is a question of beginning the pilgrim life, the command is couched in the present; when it comes to be a question of the way by which he is to be led forth from Ur, it is couched in the future. Although it is questionable whether the reference of my text is to the deliverance from Egypt, and to the marching of the tribes descended from Abraham, what time their marching was through the great wilderness, it is certainly permissible to use it in the way of illustration. Here, as in almost every case, the initial trial was the hardest. Picture to yourselves the trembling host upon the shores of the Red Sea; women that were helpless, and children that were more helpless still; the thundering of the chariots, and the shouts of the pursuing Egyptians, whose words fall like the knell of doom upon the hearts of the fugitives, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them, I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." Over against it all there is but the one word of God, "FORWARD," and it sounds in their ear as the laugh of one who mocks. "Forward!" Whither? Into the waters that seem as if impatient for their prey? Forward into the arms of death. "He led them forth by the right way"—a way that *they* knew nothing of, but it was not on that account less the right way. It seems as if in this matter, all through the forty years, the same idea was carried out. The knowledge of the way remained altogether with

God ; He, so to speak, became responsible for the way ; all they had to do was to follow. It required implicit confidence to follow one along an unknown way even by day, but how much more to follow him by night. Yet this, too, entered into the plan which God had formed for the perfecting of their trust in Him. “ And so it was, that when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed ; whether it was by day *or by night* that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed.” At the commandment of the Lord they rested in their tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed ; they kept the charge of the Lord, at the commandment of the Lord, by the hand of Moses.” It may well be said, “ Which things are an allegory.” For to us, after all the years that are past, the way of the Lord is not changed. Let any one who has reached, say forty or fifty years of pilgrimage, look back, and consider how little of the way was known to him by which the Lord led him forth ! How little the conception which he had at the beginning of his journey, where this year of grace would find him. We commence some year with the belief that when its closing month shall have come we will find ourselves in the same town, or village, surrounded by the same friends, listening to the same minister Sabbath after Sabbath, going out to the same workshop, tilling the same farm, and, lo ! we are miles

on miles away from all the surroundings with which we were familiar ; in a strange land, among strange faces, everything strange, everything changed, save the One, the God who has led us by an unknown, and yet by the right way. The experience of the past leads us to sing that song which David of old wrote and sang—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Not by a *straight* way did the Lord lead forth His redeemed. Among the axioms of the mathematician this finds a place—"That a straight line is the shortest that can be drawn between two points." In leading His redeemed, God seldom leads them by a straight line. In the kingdom of providence, as in the kingdom of nature, *straight* lines are the exception. I have been struck with this fact as belonging to the analogy of the workings of God, and as showing that the one great mind runs through all. Men deal much in straight lines. Our houses, for instance, abound in them ; our roads, so far as we can manage them, are formed on the principle of the straight line. Now, look at nature, can you find for me a single leaf in the forest which is straight ? do you know any coast line that is a straight line ? God's works are framed mostly upon the curve ; the sphere, the circle, the segment of the circle, almost everywhere. Now, as it is in nature, so it is in providence. The cases in which a man is led, by a straight line, to the point of vantage he has reached are very few. It

certainly was not so in the case of Him whose feet they hurt with fetters, and who was laid in iron until the time that his word came, the word of the Lord tried him. The two points were His father's tent in Canaan, and the vice-royal throne in Egypt. Between these two points there was no straight line for Joseph, although it would certainly have been the shortest. God makes the line full of curves. First to Shechem, then on to Dothan, then the pit wherein was no water; then Potiphar's house, next the prison, and, last of all, the throne. Of course the world says, "this was a remarkable instance of good fortune." The writer of the 105th Psalm puts it in another way: "the Lord," he says, "*sent* a man before them, even Joseph, whom they sold for a servant." There was something more than fortune in it; the Lord who sent him, had laid out the way whereby his servant was to go. I find the same great principle evolved in the kingdom of grace. It is not by a straight way that we reach that holiness without which we cannot see God. Unquestionably if God saw fit, He might make every converted man a perfectly holy man at once. That would be the straight line. But He takes our new life along a curve. There is a battle here, a sore sickness there, a victory at this point, a defeat at that, a parley with temptation now, and again a crushing defeat inflicted upon Satan. "TILL," mark that word, it does not speak of a straight line "*till* we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of

the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

There is one feature about this way whereby God leads us, that may not perhaps have presented itself to your mind. Life, when it proceeds upon a right principle, is an ascent from the lower to the higher. The city of habitation is always represented as placed upon the mountain brow ; it is the city which is *above*. What, then, is the easiest mode of ascending ? Is it a straight line or a spiral ? Even the brute creation can answer the question. You have often seen a horse ascending a hill, drawing after him a heavy load. You never saw him do so in a straight line, but always obliquely, or rather in a series of curves. It is so with our life, which is tending onwards to the heights of the delectable mountains. We could not, in our present feebleness, not to say in our present waywardness, reach the blessed heights by marching in a straight line ; if God were to command us to do so, we would ere long ask His permission to change it for the spiral, and so to compassionate our weakness, and bring us to a city where we might dwell for ever.

He led them forth by *THE* right way. Observe that word "*THE*." It is not one out of a thousand ways by which we might have been led, it is *THE* *one* way, appointed of God who is of *one* mind, and who cannot change. With Him there is no coming to a point where two or more ways meet ; no

wondering as to which out of the two is the right way. He knows that, and has from the beginning fixed it. It is not often that our Scottish metrical version mistakes the points which are emphatic; not unfrequently they give the spirit of the original Hebrew more fully than our prose version. In this sentence, however, they have mistaken the gist of the words before me. "Them, also, in a way to walk that right is, He did guide." The substitution of the indefinite for the original article withdraws one of the outstanding glories of the verse.

I could have wished to have spoken to you of the qualifications presented in the nature and character of God for acting as our guide. A few sentences must take the place of what might otherwise have been expanded into a discourse. Think of the infinite wisdom which He possesses. The riches of wisdom and of knowledge are treasured up in Him. This is a qualification which is indispensable in a guide. He must know the way, otherwise he cannot lead others. Jehovah knows the end from the beginning, can pass along the most intricate ways, and bring us out into a wealthy place, even though it be through fire and through water. Then, mark the gentleness and *tenderness* of His leading. He has not changed through all the years in which it was said of Him, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love, and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bare them and carried them all the days of

old." The power with which He leads us can be found in none other. This is He that led by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name; that led His people to make Himself a glorious name."

CIVITAS DEI.

Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please.

SPENSER.

PSALM cvii. 7.— “That they might go to a city of habitation.”

THE few words of introduction prefixed to my discourse upon the preceding verses, must suffice as introduction to that portion of them which I am now about to consider. We have seen the low estate of the Lord's redeemed previous to their redemption; we have guided your thoughts to the word which marks the turning point between man's extremity and God's opportunity; and, last of all, the good gifts of God to His redeemed—deliverance, guidance, and rest. I propose now considering the words, “That they might go to a city of habitation.”

I. *This leading on the part of God contemplates a definite end.*—“He led them forth that they might go to a city of habitation.” Known unto the Lord are all His ways from the beginning. But to us, for the most part He makes known the end only. The intervening space between the beginning and the end of the way, He most frequently shrouds in a darkness which we cannot penetrate. It is part of that

thoughtful tenderness of which Isaiah speaks, that the end is revealed. By that revelation He meets and accommodates one of those great principles of our nature, without which nothing whatever would be undertaken by us; or, if undertaken, it would speedily be abandoned in presence of the difficulties and trials which we are destined to encounter. *Hope* finds its nutriment in the end thus divinely revealed to us, namely, "a city of habitation." The difference between those who set out upon and prosecute the journey of life without the guidance of God, and without reference to His will, and those others who are spoken of as "the redeemed of Jehovah," does not lie in the end proposed by the former, for they, too, in their journeying contemplate a similar end; they, too, aim at a city of habitation. One, for instance, sets before him the accumulation of a fortune, and after many struggles, many reverses, and much trampling upon the rights of others, he reaches his city, only to find that in reaching it, he has not reached rest, or peace, or lasting joy. Another proposes to himself a more noble object. His end is distinction in literature, or in the field of scientific research. Long days of toilsome seeking, long nights of study lie before him, and a certain joy thrills through his veins as discovery, after discovery is made. These successive discoveries are intended as the stepping-stones to some one great and conclusive discovery, which shall crown him with undying honour and renown;

and now, when he should be reaching the end—the city of habitation, it is only to find that it is with him as with the child who believes that the horizon marks the end of the world, the uttermost limit of space, but finds, when he has reached it, another horizon stretching into what seems to be the infinite. What guarantee, then, have we that in this journey which we are taking under the leadership of God, it will not be with us as with these others? You have the assurance of Him who cannot lie, all whose ways are truth and faithfulness. You have the assurance of those who have already reached the goal, or rather those who, after long and toilsome marching are, with outstretched hand, just about to touch it. “I am now ready,” says Paul, “to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day; and not to me only, but to all them also that love His appearing.” If that be not enough, you have the pleading and the promise of Him who is the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, who has said—“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you REST.” Will there, then, you ask, be no progress in that other life, where is the city of God? Is it the finality of being and of feeling? I am not prepared to say that it is. This city of habitation, in its highest sense, may be but

the starting point for yet grander views of the glory and wisdom of Him who has led us forth by the right way ; it may be the beginning of another end in which we shall understand more of the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, than we have ever done ; we rising into the perfect humanity of Jesus, and into yet more glorious participation of the divine nature. If this be the definite end to which we are being led, it is not worth while to make a great outcry about the darkness, and the difficulty and the danger of the way. I can understand how Paul should have said, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us ; for the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the Son of God."

II.—*This END is reached by human activity working together with the divine.*—"He led them forth that they might go," not that they might be *carried* to a city of habitation. It would be easy at this point to raise endless questions as to the purposes of God in relation to the freedom of the human will, or to enter into subtle speculations as to the limits of human action in connection with the Divine. These difficulties seem to me to have been solved long since in a Psalm of David, which, though it does not deal with what is called the higher metaphysique, still throws a flood of light on this problem which has occupied for ages the mind of man : "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." The

power of God is exerted initially in changing the direction of the human will, and in bringing that will into conformity with the divine. He leads us forth by the right way ; sets our feet on the path which He wishes us to tread, and says, "This is the way, *walk ye* in it." God cannot, with reverence be it said, tread the path *for* us, we must do that for ourselves. The strength that enables us to hold on to the end—to the city of habitation—is God's strength ; "He works in us to will and to do." In this there is presented to us the *maximum* of inducement to make progress, together with the *minimum* of glory to ourselves. Almighty power applies itself to human weakness, with the result that God leads, and we follow. It is a remarkable illustration of how the activities of life dispose of the speculations and doubts which are engendered of indolence and inactivity. So far back as the days of Jacob, the matter seems to have been understood, namely, that while God is, and must be, all in all, man has his part also to perform. Here is the promise of the Eternal, "Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will *bring* thee again into the land ; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." I wish you particularly to note this expression, "I will *bring thee* again." When Jacob registered the vow, "Jehovah shall be my God," he does not say, "since God will be with me, so that *I shall be brought* again to my father's house," but, "so that *I*

come again to my father's house in peace." His coming to his father's house depends upon God bringing him ; but God's bringing him stands connected with his own going, and is conditioned upon it. The fatalism which says, "if it be the will of God that I should reach the end which He has appointed, then there is nothing that will or that can prevent it. God cannot change ; that which He has spoken *must* have its fulfillment." That is but half a truth, and we know that half a truth is to the full as dangerous as a whole lie. This is the whole truth, that God has most certainly willed that you should reach the end of the way, but He has willed also that you should yourself continue advancing from point to point, otherwise there can be no reaching of the end for you. You are, that is, to act as if everything depended on yourself, while as yet the consciousness is ever present with you that all depends on God. As we journey towards the city of habitation, even the best of us are apt to forget this, and God has, in such a case, His own way of bringing it to our remembrance. Suddenly, there presents itself some insurmountable difficulty ; some dark, swollen stream, rushing on with a force that threatens to carry all before it, and we feel that to venture into the hissing torrent would be only to court destruction. But a moment before, we were congratulating ourselves upon the vigour of our advance, and upon the rapid progress which we were making towards the city of habitation, but all that

seems to have come to an end. THEN “*He* bears us, carries us in His strong arms, setting us down upon the further side, and, as He does so, we say, “Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not ; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, Thy name is from everlasting.”

III.—*Provision is made in this leading forth for the social instincts of man.*—The remark which I have now made finds its justification in the expression, “that they might go to a city of habitation.” When you learn that both in the fourth and seventh verses the literal translation of the words is, “that they might go to a city where men dwell,” and contrast that with the sentence, “they wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way,” you see that there is brought out not only a prominent feature of the wilderness life, but also a prominent feature of the life which men lead under the guidance of God. The “wilderness” represents the life that is alienated from the life that is in God. That is an essentially solitary life. You might suppose it to be otherwise, for the world rings the changes upon boon-companionship, and upon the pleasant comradeship which it has to offer. To be led by God, that, according to the world, is to give yourself up to a life of moping, and of standing by yourself. Never was there a greater mistake ; every godless heart is a solitary, lonely heart, for the essence of sin is selfishness. It does not matter how great the

multitude is by which you are surrounded ; how loud the laughter, or how apparently close the bonds that unite the wanderers, there is not one of them all who would not, if the occasion arose, say to his fellow, “you must fend for yourself; I have enough to do with myself; *sauve qui peut* is the order of the day. How many of the men in the far country clung to the prodigal when his money was done, and when there were no feasts to be given? When he began to be in want, did he not find himself alone, “deserted at his utmost need, by those his former bounty fed.” He could not have believed it, had not bitter experience taught him, that the way of sin is a lonely way, and solitary. With a certain grim humour, which is none the less true that it is grim, he is represented by the Great Teacher, as driven in his loneliness to the companionship of the swine which he fed, “he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat.” Poor Burns! I could almost weep when I think of his great genius, and of his sensuous nature. Himself a wanderer, and yet believing in the unselfishness of the people in the great lone wilderness, he could think of no higher, closer bond than that of having been under the influence of strong drink for weeks together. In that poem in which occur the beautiful lines—

“But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snowflakes on the river,
A moment white, then gone for ever.

Or like the borealis race
That flit e're you can point their place,
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amid the storm."

A few years pass, and the following is Burns' own experience of the solitariness and the selfishness of the wilderness life. A year or so before his death, he was seen one night pacing with knit brow and heavy heart, before a fashionable ball-room in the town of Dumfries. All the leading county people were assembling for the enjoyment of a splendid ball. Burns, who had been at one time hand in glove with the best of them, was now neglected; uninvited, and passed over, he could not tear himself away from looking at the brilliant assembly. He was heard by one standing near to mutter the words of the old ballad—

"O were we young as we ance hae been,
We sud hae been galloping doun on yon green;
And linking it ower the lily white lea,
And werena my heart licht, I wad dee."

The iron was in truth entering into his soul, and he was beginning to find that his path of life had not led to a city where men dwell.

The contrast between the wilderness life and that which men lead in the City of God, makes itself felt almost immediately after the THEN has passed into the region of experience. The very first thing

God does is to expel the selfishness from our heart, and to make us understand that no man can live to himself. "He setteth the solitary in families," Now, the fundamental principle of family life is, "One for all, and all for one." No family prospers, or ever can prosper, where that principle is overlooked. The church is only the family circle under a wider aspect—it is the "whole family named of God in heaven and on earth," and, in the church, the same fundamental idea shows itself, "One for all, and all for One." Nay, it is the very principle on which the Cross of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rests. There assuredly it is *One for all*. "He gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." If you look on the other side of the titulus erected by God, and not by Pilate, over the Cross, you find the all for one, "none of us liveth to himself," we, "all of us, live unto the Lord." So, then, among the old things that have passed away, is the solitariness of the wilderness life. We are marching on to a city *where men dwell*. In community of sentiment, and in the possession of a common interest and aim, life finds its chief delight and holiest joy. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." The social instincts of the human heart nowhere find a development so pure and heavenly as in the God-led life. These instincts are concerned with those who are journeying together to the same glorious destiny. Is the way long? There are words of good cheer now from one, now from

another. Is the way dark ? There are songs in the house of their pilgrimage, and as they near the city that is above, certain elder brothers of theirs standing on the walls, sing the words which a pilgrim heard in Bedford Jail more than two hundred years ago—

“Come in, come in ;
Eternal glory thou shalt win.”

IV. *The end crowns the work.*—“That they might go to a city.” The use of the word “city,” as designating the *terminus ad quem*, is peculiar to the Old Testament, and it has found its way thence into the language of Christianity. It forms a very striking illustration of how the external circumstances of those who assist in laying the foundation of a religious system mould the language in which that system is presented to the minds of men. Suppose Christianity, or its forerunner Judaism, to be taking its beginning in this year of grace, 1883, and among ourselves, instead of among a Semitic race, I feel confident that the words of my text would have been changed. Acquainted, as we are, with large towns and cities; knowing something of the squalor and misery which lurk in their nooks and dark recesses ; finding that in most European cities of any note those revolutionary spirits who overturn thrones and dynasties, live and move, and have their being, we should never have chosen a city as the emblem of rest, and security, and peace. Our Saxon way of looking at the matter is this : When we think of heaven as

the end that crowns the work, we think of it as an interminable series of plains, watered by streams which gleam in the sunlight of the countenance of Him who is the glory of the goodly land. Heaven associates itself in our mind with symbols taken from rural rather than from city life. In the scriptures, however, which were written in an Eastern country, and for Orientals, you will find the city to be taken as the normal type of the celestial state. Even Paul, who was more cosmopolitan than any of the other apostles, cannot step out of this idea, and again and again uses the expression "conversation," as in the well-known passage, "our conversation is in heaven," that is, our life as citizens. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, himself evidently a Jew, speaks of the father of the faithful as "looking for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." "Ye are come," he says, "to the city of the living God." And chief of them all, the disciple who stood by the Cross of Christ, paints, with the rapid though sure touch of one who had seen it, the city of the great God, with its jewelled walls, with its gates of pearl, and golden streets, and no night, but everlasting day. It was, therefore, conceived to be an end worthy of God to lead forth His redeemed by the right way, that they might go to a city where men dwell, nay, to a city where *God* himself dwells, for "the name of the city from that shall be, Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there." There were three main ideas associated in the minds of the men of that day with a "*city*."

1. *Beauty*.—If you wish to become acquainted with what to an eastern mind constitutes the idea of beauty as connected with a city, you have only to read the concluding chapters of the Apocalypse, where trope is heaped upon trope, in order to bring out this feature in the city to which God is leading His redeemed. Perhaps to the highly cultivated and somewhat conventional tastes of the literati of our own day, it may seem as if the description were so overdone as to be almost grotesque. But, then, the Apocalypse was not written for the literateurs of the 19th century, it was written for children, and for men whose highest attainment was, that they had the minds of little children. To such there is no book in the Bible so grand, no book in the world so wonderful as the Apocalypse. I recollect that towards the beginning of my ministry, I was summoned to visit a child of some eight years of age, who was supposed to be nearing home. Having entreated the Father to be good to the wee man, I asked whether he wished that I should read with him a verse or two of the New Testament, a copy of which lay upon his pillow. I suggested the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to John, when the voice that was so soon to sing the *Te Deum laudamus*, quivering with emotion, said, “No! read about the bonnie gold streets, and the men wi’ white claes” (clothes). I had not finished reading the Apocalypse above two hours, when the eight-year-old child knew more about it all than I do even now,

after years of study, aided by the most learned commentators. You say, perhaps, it is only another "Arabian Nights," the caverns in which are all ablaze with precious stones, and the palaces one mass of splendour arising from walls encrusted with pearls, and rubies, and diamonds of priceless value. But the mind of the child feels that there is nothing behind all this; it stands simply for itself, and for nothing more, and after the first wonder is past it is simply laughed at. Now, with the Book of Revelation, the feeling that there is something behind the jewelled walls, and golden streets, and sea of glass, mingled with fire, gives to it all a first place in the imagination and in the affections. As the child grows into the man, the symbol gradually retires before the spiritual reality, and all the beauty of the city resolves itself into this one word, HEAVEN, and the crowning beauty of heaven is its perfected holiness. Even though God led His redeemed by the right way, yet they were not, as they passed on to the better land, without flaw or stain. Mingling with the songs in the house of their pilgrimage, were not unfrequently tears, and lamentation, and sighs; from one of the noblest of the pilgrims are heard these words—words echoed and repeated by thousands of God's redeemed since, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But when the gates of the city are passed, holiness reigns for evermore, and sorrow and sighing, and tears, are gone for ever, and

across the inscription on the priestly mitre, passeth never the shadow of a sin, and HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD rests, and abides as the badge of them whom the Lord has led.

2. *Strength and Security.*—To the Hebrew mind, the ideal of a city was that which they so fondly and so beautifully termed, the VISION OF PEACE—Jerusalem. I do not suppose that Jerusalem is the city referred to in the words of my text, nor indeed any other city then existing on earth, but that the Psalmist wishes to bring before our mind the special privileges connected with a city ; and, among these, the strength of the city and the security gained by the men who dwell there, form a prominent feature. In the wilderness, the traveller stood exposed to danger on every side. Provisions might fail, and where all was barren, there were no means of replenishing the stock ; most of all to be dreaded, was the possibility of their water giving out, and lest, hungry and thirsty, their souls should faint within them. Added to this, there was the dread of the sudden foray on the part of the Ishmaelites, and of a panting messenger bearing tidings of evil. “The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slayed the servants with the edge of the sword ; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.” The opposite of all this was presented by the city ; provisions, unless in time of absolute famine, could readily be secured ; the water supply was arranged

for inside of the city gates, so that, in the event of a siege, the supply of this necessity of life might not be cut off; and stout walls stood between the marauders of the desert and the men who dwelt in a city. You cannot be at any loss to understand that, when the Psalmist says, "Jehovah led His redeemed forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation," he wishes it to be inferred that, once in that city, they are safe. "Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God;" and, among all the glorious things which are said, *this* is not the least glorious, that there is absolute safety for every one who passes through the gates and remains within the walls of the city. If it was prophesied of old regarding the way by which God led His redeemed, that "no lion should be there, nor any ravenous beast should go up thereon," how much more now, when the journey is ended, and the city wherein men dwell, is reached—the city with its walls of strength, and with its great plenty within—how much more now shall the song of the ransomed pilgrims be, "Violence shall no more be heard in the land, wasting nor destruction within our borders, but we shall call our walls salvation, and our gates praise."

3. *Rest.*—I must admit that this is by no means a universal feature of life in a city. Men speak of it as being, for the most part, a life of ceaseless activity; what they complain of most is, that it is so full of unrest, and that in order to secure quiet and rest they

must leave the city, and betake themselves to the country for a time. So far as concerns our modern cities, and our modern life, that is very much the case, but the cities of the east are not the scene of bustling activity which our cities present. To the fervid, pushing mind of the Englishman or of the American, it seems as if eastern cities were only half awake, and such a thing as haste is utterly unknown. That being so, the word "city" is not so bad a symbol of the REST which remains for the people of God in the city which hath foundations. It is the great end to which God has been all along leading His redeemed. The entire absence of *rest* in the case of those whose hearts are under the dominion of the God of this world, is one of the saddest things I know. It seems as if it were the embodiment of the doom and judgment pronounced by God against the wicked. "There is no peace to the wicked." Not there *shall* be no peace, though that also would have been true, but there *is*—in the present state of being—no peace. Some years ago I looked down from the gallery of the Bourse in Paris upon one of the most wonderful sights I have ever seen. On the floor beneath, stood a great surging multitude of men belonging to different nations. The restless Frenchman, the grave Spaniard, the quick-witted Greek, the lithe Italian, and many, many more. What struck me most about it was, first of all, the effect of the sound of so many voices, all speaking in loud excited tones. I never understood till then the

meaning of the expression, "and His voice was as as the sound of many waters." Here, then, was terrible excitement, an utter want of repose in this great temple of mammon. I cannot describe the look upon their countenances otherwise, than as a reproduction of the look which I once saw on the face of a betting man, who was gazing into the window of the office of one of the sporting papers, in expectation of the exhibition of a telegram as to the winning of the Derby, on which probably life or death for him depended. The look on all these eager faces was precisely the same, and I felt that twenty-four hours of it would send me either to my grave, or to a madhouse. How life continues to exist under such conditions, I cannot understand. Now, in leading forth His redeemed by the right way, He draws them back from that fevered excitement. He does not forbid them to go to the Exchange, or to the market; nay, He says, do whatever business you have to do, skilfully, prudently, and above all, truthfully, and come back to Me as quickly as possible, that you may REST. Thank God there are resting stations as we march through the wilderness on to the city; wells of refreshing, quiet moments and hours during which the fevered pulse regains its quiet, steady beat, and the heart settles down from its wild throbbing, and there is a foretaste of that Sabbath which crowns for His beloved the work of God.

Ah me ! ah me ! that I
In Kedar's tent here stay,
No place like this on high,
Thither, Lord, guide my way.
O happy place !
When shall I be,
My God with Thee
To see Thy face ?

PATER FILIIS SUIS.

“ He lives a model in his life to show,
That when he dies, and through the world they go,
Some men may pause and say, when some admire,
‘ They are his sons, and worthy of their sire.’ ”

ISAIAH xxxviii. 19.—“ The father to the children shall make
known Thy truth.”

How instructive it is to find in this ancient song of thanksgiving a reference, so pointed and distinct, to the continued propagation of the truth, and to the best of all methods for ensuring that the name of Jehovah shall not be forgotten ! It is the song of a great statesman, of one on whom the hand of the Lord had been laid, and who had, from the confines of eternity, looked into the heart of things, not only what the hereafter meant for himself, but also what it meant for his nation. His recovery meant for himself, a life of humble gratitude, to be spent in the service of Jehovah—“ the living, the living he shall praise thee, as I do this day ;” while, for the nation,

it meant the enforcement of the law that had long before been laid down for Israel, in order that Israel might hand on, from generation to generation, the history of an age when God dwelt with men, and spoke with them from between the cherubim; "the father to the children shall make known Thy truth." In an age when the training of the young is to a large extent a matter of delegation, and when the state holds that the duty of education is duly performed if, by means of another, for some seven or eight years, the parent has procured for his child a certain amount of instruction, it may not be out of place to look back to the days in which the words of my text were uttered, and to mark how God himself arranged, first of all, that the rising generation should acquire the knowledge which would fit them for becoming God-fearing men and useful citizens. One can scarcely conceive a more beautiful picture than that which is presented by the carrying out of the divine command as set forth in the following: "And these words which I command thee shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." This was the system under which David and all the great spiritualists of the old economy had been brought up. It was the system under which David's son and David's Lord was brought up—the system under

which He grew in wisdom, and in favour with God and with man. From the lips of Joseph and Mary, the holy human intellect of Jesus heard for the first time, and learned with all the reverent wonder of a little child, the grand history of His people's past; heard of His great ancestor, the son of Jesse, and with quickened pulse followed, I have no doubt, the story of the shepherd boy who stood astride of the prostrate, headless trunk of the boasting foe who had said, "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air to eat, and to the beasts of the field." From the lips of His parents He first gathered the history and the meaning of the Pass-over, and for weeks the words of the old story of Abraham's faith kept sounding in his ears, and Abraham's words, repeated first to Him by His mother's lips, lay down with Him when He lay down, and rose with Him when He rose—"My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." So far from the eighteen centuries which have passed since the holy child Jesus was so trained, having lessened the importance of this God-appointed means of grace, I venture to assert that all the best and greatest of our race, all the most useful men and women in our churches, owe their greatness, their goodness, and their usefulness in large measure to the fact of King Hezekiah's prophecy being, through all these years, fulfilled, "The fathers to the children shall make known Thy truth."

I.—The thing to be made known—*God's truth*,

Observe that the first stage of instruction is already past—the child has been taught that there is a God. There is, perhaps, nothing in the shape of abstract truth which it is more difficult to impress upon the mind of a child than this. You have, for instance, nothing of a material kind on earth by which you can illustrate this abstract idea. It is not till you have called in the aid of your own relationship to the child, that you can succeed in making God known to the dawning intellect. When you have got the child to understand that God is simply the Great Father, producing, nourishing, supporting, loving the workmanship of His hands, and that you yourself are but the feeble reflection of His glory, and of His goodness, the first great point is gained. You have secured a foothold for all subsequent religious teaching, and, so long as the belief of that truth remains, not only theoretically but also practically, the soul can never so drift away from the light as to be in total darkness. Hezekiah supposes, then, that the foundation of all true teaching has been laid, and the question comes now to be, what had you better teach your children about God? “Teach them,” says one, “that God is LOVE; put that in the foreground; teach them that the sunbeam and the flower, and the smile of the sea, are but forthflowings of a love whose fountain head is in Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being.” “No!” says the King of Judah, “teach your children that God is TRUTH, teach them *that* first of all.”

It is all the more surprising that he should say so, inasmuch as, at first sight, you might suppose that he, plucked from the very jaws of death, would insist upon it that God's great LOVE should be held in remembrance by all who essayed to teach the young. But Hezekiah has, as it seems to me, a deeper insight into the nature of God than many of our learned men of the present day. God's *love* is only God's *truth*; it is, God true to His own nature, God true to His own promise, God true to His own threatenings. It is possible to conceive of LOVE as eliminated from the perfections of God, and God still to exist; but you cannot conceive of TRUTH as taken away from the nature of God, without the very idea of God being wrenched from the human soul. The prophecy, therefore, of the King of Judah rests on a sound philosophy, and is applicable everywhere, and always, in all teaching of the young. For, observe, teaching does not consist in setting forth certain facts to be embraced by the memory, it consists in presenting facts upon which other facts can be made to rest; facts which can be applied to the many-sided life which men are called upon to lead. This fact of the faithfulness, or the truth of God, is one of those fundamental facts which are being applied by men, not only in everyday life, but in the highest concerns of the soul. Here, for instance, is an offer made of the pardon of sin—a statement made, that it is possible for God to reverse the whole current of the past life, and to

recreate the man after his own image in knowledge, righteousness, and truth. That is questioned by the unbelief of the human heart: How is it to be made good as a fact for the human intellect and spirit? I know of but one way. You must go back upon the foundation laid in childhood, when the father or the mother made known to the children God's truth; you must appeal to that fact, and follow it up by the statement that, "if we confess our sins, God is *faithful* and *just* to forgive our sins."

There presents itself now for answer a very important question. How can we best make known this great fact, that God is not only true, but TRUTH? I may, before answering that question, state to you how I believe it *cannot* be done. You cannot make known the truth of God to your children by philosophical disquisitions on the necessity for TRUTH finding a place among the perfections of God. I can recollect having had read to me on Sabbath evenings, when I was yet but a child, some excellent sermons by one of the ablest of American divines. I refer to a former President of Yale College—the Rev. Dr Dwight. One of these sermons I know to be upon the question of which I am now treating, and I have had the curiosity to refer to it. I find, from a note appended to one sentence in it, that it was preached immediately before the Communion of the Lord's Supper, and here are some of the leading propositions, "God's truth is evident from His

benevolence," now I should feel inclined to reverse this, and say, God's benevolence is evident from His *truth*. "It is evident, further, from the independence and immutability of God. . . . The excellency of truth, and the turpitude of falsehood furnish an infinite motive to the Creator to speak truth only."

All this may be quite philosophical, and also quite true, but it had made no impression, not the slightest, either upon my memory, or upon my heart; but half-a-dozen sentences uttered by one who is now in eternity, in reference to the truth of God as a matter of *personal* experience, has never been forgotten; so that I build upon that simple fact, the statement, that in making known the truth of God, you act most potently upon the youthful mind when you present it from the side of human experience, rather than from the side of argument and philosophy. You find, in the Book of Psalms, reference after reference to the truth of God, but never in the way of argument, always as a matter standing connected with the Psalmist's own knowledge, or as a vantage ground from which he may plead with God in prayer. One entering into the house of a poor woman, found her lying upon a bed of sickness, but at the same time cheerful and contented. Wishing to read with her a few verses of the Word of God, the visitor took up a copy of the Bible which was lying upon the table. On the page which lay open, were found upon the margin several verses marked with the letters "T" and "P." The fact

that these markings were not confined to one page, but were abundantly scattered over the whole book, prompted the enquiry on the part of the visitor as to what these letters meant. With the wonder which often accompanies our discovery of ignorance on the part of another, the sick woman said, "T and P, why that stands for 'TRIED AND PROVED;' all the verses so marked have been found by me to be the very truth. Here a promise, there a warning; here a prophecy, there a threatening, but not one of them has failed. When I die, that Bible will be left to my children, and they will find there what comforted and strengthened their widowed mother, and what will comfort and strengthen *them*." It was indeed a very touching illustration of the words of my text, "the father unto the children shall make known Thy truth,"—not as a dogma in theology, but as a thing "tried and proved."

II.—There are no such teachers of the young as those mentioned in my text, "*The fathers* to the children shall make known." It is true that Jesus said to one of His apostles, "feed my lambs," and that in the injunction so given, he included not only Simon Barjonas, but all His servants who should be engaged in carrying out the commandment given shortly afterwards, "go ye, teach all nations!" Church life, however, is founded upon "family life." The Church of Christ is built up by the family, and the instructions of the ministry do, to a large extent, fail in their object, unless they are preceded and

followed up by the instruction of the domestic circle. In our own day, we hear many complaints as to the unsuitableness of the ordinary pulpit ministrations to the young, and concern is expressed as to the growing indifference of children to the services of the sanctuary. Unquestionably, there is no small amount of truth both in the complaint, and in regard to the growing indifference, but when the matter is searched out to the bottom, it will be found that the blame does not lie so much with the pulpit, as with the homes and households. That the young should enjoy, and in some measure comprehend the truth, it is necessary that certain fundamental points of knowledge should be acquired from the lips of those to whom the child owes its existence. It is no less necessary that conversation as to the word of truth spoken by the servants of God must follow up the preaching of the word, and "the fathers to the children must make known the truth." I shall suppose that the subject to be taught is that which is mentioned here, namely, the TRUTH, or the FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. Of the two, which is likely to prove most effectual? That the minister should preach a series of discourses upon that topic, or that the parent should set before his child's mind a leaf out of his own experience? Take, for instance, the text—"Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." One of the sons in the family of a Russian farmer having left the paternal

roof, and having gone to St Petersburg that he might acquire a knowledge of mercantile pursuits, returned for a visit to his father's house. Unfortunately, like some youths whom we have known, his faith in his father's God became weak, and it was a question with him whether this God, whom he had been taught to worship, *was* indeed faithful to His promises. This becoming known to the godly father, grieved him much. In conversation, the father resolved that he would introduce the question of the faithfulness of God. "When you," he said, addressing his son, "were but a little child, a succession of bad harvests, and losses met with by friends to whom I had lent my little store of hard-earned savings, brought me to the verge of ruin. The proprietor pressed me hard, and at last informed me that, on a certain day, I should have to yield up the farm. This meant for me, for your mother, for you, and for the other children, the being cast penniless upon the world. The words, "Trust in the Lord, and thou shalt dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed," came into my mind on the day before that fixed for leaving the home in which we had been for years. Though I had no prospect of succour, still the words kept sounding like the echo of a pleasant song in my mind and in my heart. After we had retired to rest, I heard a sharp tapping at the window of the room in which I slept. Opening the window, I found there a tame raven, which had been for

several years about the farm. He dropped from his bill a ring of great value, richly set with diamonds. The inscription on the inside of the ring shewed me that it belonged to the nobleman who owned the farm from which I was so soon to be cast out. When the day dawned, I set out to his house, and restored what had been so mysteriously brought to me. The ring, not only valuable in itself, but as having been an heir-loom for generations in his family, was placed in his hand. As I returned to my home with the welcome news that my debt had been cancelled, and that we were at liberty to remain, I said, "God is a God of truth. I dwell in the land, and verily I am fed." This one incident, told by the lips of the father, was worth all possible sermons in which it would be established beyond the power of argument to controvert it, that "God is true." The power and the value of a parent's words do not lie in their eloquence, or in the learning which they bring to light. They lie in the fact that they are the experience of years, reproduced by those who stand to us in the closest of earthly relationships—experiences, sealed by a love which many waters cannot quench, and which many floods cannot drown.

As against the duty of religious training in the home circle, it will be urged, that the conditions of human life are very different in our day from what they were in Palestine two thousand years ago. There are no longer the quiet, the rest, the opportu-

nity for this kind of teaching which were enjoyed in the days of David and of Hezekiah. With our city population, and more especially with the hard-wrought sons of toil, it is difficult to see how, in any sense worthy of the name, instruction in sacred things can be given by the fathers to their children. The keen competition which exists in modern life; the hours of the morning and of the evening at which labour is commenced and ended, precluded the possibility of much being done in the way of the fathers speaking with the children. Recently, in connection with the ill-fated vessel which, in the act of being launched, was submerged in the Clyde, nearly 200 human beings lost their life. Among them were some who were evidently Christian parents. Of one it was told by his widow, that on the evening before his death, he came home late from work, and tired. But tired though he was, he read with his wife, as his wont was, a chapter of the Word of God, "the children," she says, "being all in bed and asleep." One can easily understand how difficult it would be for that Christian father to make known to his children the great mysteries of the kingdom, and how the return of the Sabbath would be hailed as the one opportunity from week's end to week's end, of presenting to their tender minds the truth and the faithfulness of God. But great as the difficulty is, it is one that must be faced, and overcome, if the young of the present day are to take their place in the church, and do their work

manfully, and after a God-fearing manner in the world. Much as I value our Sabbath Schools, I cannot regard them as a substitute for this anciently-prescribed method to which Hezekiah refers. Where the parent systematically neglects the religious training of his children, the Sabbath School, or, in other words, the Church, by its ministry, and by its teaching-power, must stand in *loco parentis*; but it cannot be permitted to do so where the family is either professedly or really Christian. It is, as I have said, in the family that the foundation must be laid, the Sabbath School comes in as a valuable auxiliary, in which the stimulus of a wider sphere, and of contact with other minds, may be derived.

III. The making known of God's truth to the young is of all others the most hopeful part of Christian work. In almost every country, the proverbs which associate hopefulness with the instruction of the young, are plentiful. The abundance and similarity of these proverbs establish the fact, that the receptivity of the youthful mind is greater than it is in more advanced years. The Hebrew proverbs, however, are fuller and richer in this respect than those of any other country. The portion of them which asserts most fully, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, is addressed especially to the young, by one who speaks in the character of a father: "My son, if sinners entice thee; my son, if thou wilt receive my words; my son, forget not my law." Hear, ye children, the

instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink." My reason for referring to this proverbial literature both of Jew and Gentile is, because a proverb is the concentrated result, in words, of the experience of many centuries, and I infer, from the experience having crystallised itself into this form, that men in every land, and under every sky, have found the instruction of the young more hopeful than the instruction of those who are somewhat advanced in life. In this fact I find the corrective of a mistake into which our own day has fallen. We have come, in regard to the conversion of men, to place more stress upon special services, than upon continued, systematic teaching by means of the Word. I do not say that we are wrong in having regard to services such as I have spoken of, or in hoping for conversions from revival meetings, and evangelistic services, in which what is sensational and novel takes the place of what is solid, and of what has been of longer continuance. But there can be no greater blunder than to suppose that conversions may not be effected, silently and imperceptibly, under the influence of God's truth, as presented in the home circle by those whose lips should keep knowledge. The promise made to Hebrew parents, and to all parents, is decisive upon this point—"Train up a child in the way he

should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The right training of the young will enable the spirit of God to dispense with the sudden, volcanic changes by which the evil accretions of years are removed, and the strong, evil passions of a life-time are torn up by the roots, as the forest tree is by the sweeping hurricane. This religious training of the young, in its expected result, falls in, besides, with the whole question of growth as conducted by God. Growth is seldom or never accompanied by noise ; our bodies rise from the diminutive stature of childhood, to the full stature of the perfect man, in silence. The sapling grows into the forest-king with no loud thunder-clap, with no noise of subterranean forces, but in a silence that speaks to the human heart of greater power in God than the fiercest, noisiest storm and whirlwind could do. The analogy of nature and of providence would lead me to suppose, that in the growth of religious feeling, and of religious principle, you should be able to mark, save in exceptional cases, the same great law of development. With this principle stands connected the great hopefulness of the work contemplated in my text. The silent building up of a new and spiritual life goes on side by side with the up-building of the physical life, and the soul, as it becomes more capable of realising the superiority of the divine to the human, drinks in, with increasing ardour, those high thoughts of God's faithfulness which make the life not only beautiful, but strong.

“The seraphic Richard Baxter,” says his biographer, “was at one time greatly troubled concerning himself because he could recollect no time when there was a gracious change in his character. But, he discovered at length, that education is as properly a means of grace as preaching, and thus found the sweeter comfort in his love to God, that he learned to love Him so early.”

“VICISTI GALILAEÆ.”

Oh, the crowning day is coming !
Is coming by-and-by,
When our Lord shall come in power
And glory from on high !
Oh, the glorious sight will gladden
Each waiting, watchful eye,
In the crowning day that's coming
By-and-by.

1 COR. ix. 12.—“ We suffer all things lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ.”

“ THE Gospel of Christ ! ” The good news, that is, of God's love in Christ to dying men. Of all subjects, whether of thought or of speech, this was the one which lay nearest to the heart of Paul. The proofs of his deep love for the Gospel lie scattered up and down his Epistles in such abundance, that the difficulty is to select one or two of the more striking. In a strong nature, like that of Paul, this love is something that touches the deepest feelings of the heart, and draws tears from the eyes. Does it not tell its own story, that in all these letters written by him

who had been exposed to the bitter rage of the persecutor, the word "weeping," as applied to himself, occurs only once, and that, too, in connection with the opposition rendered to Christ and His Gospel? "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even *weeping*, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Mark, again, how he casts to the winds all considerations of reputation as a preacher, where this Gospel of Christ is concerned. "What then?" he says, "notwithstanding, every way, whether in practice or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." The sight of his own bonds do not depress him, so long as the Gospel of Christ remains unbound. "I suffer trouble," he says, "as an evil-doer, even unto bonds; but *the Word of God is not bound*." "My bonds, and other things which have happened unto me, have fallen out for the furtherance of the Gospel." There is, perhaps, no better proof of the deep passionate love which the Apostle felt in regard to the Gospel, than the words of my text,—“We suffer, or, rather, ‘we bear,’ all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ.” There is no better test of the amount of a man’s love for any person, or object, than the amount of sacrifice which he is prepared to make rather than that the cause which is so dear to him should suffer loss or injury. Here, Paul sets forth his willingness to give up, in his own case, a personal right which rested upon the sanction of the Old Testament

economy, and upon the principles of common justice, —the right, namely, of receiving from the Corinthians the temporal support to which he was entitled as a labourer in the spiritual harvest field. In the church of Corinth, there were some men mean enough to hint that Paul was making what is called in our day, “a good thing” out of this itinerant preaching; more, indeed, than he could ever have made by tent making. This touched his honour, and on that ground, even, it would not have been surprising that he should have acted as he did. But it was more than a question of honour, or even of a justifiable pride; it was a matter that might possibly hinder the Gospel of Christ, and, therefore, he says, “I, who have borne so much for that Gospel, will bear this too; I will, with mine own hands, provide things honest in the sight of all men; I will place it beyond the power of any man in Corinth to say that I have made a good thing of preaching. A meal or so less in the week, a few month’s longer wearing of this cloak which has been my travelling companion for so many years, are as nothing compared with what may happen to the Gospel of Christ; I will, therefore, bear all things, that I may cause no hindrance to the Gospel. Better that I should, before the face of my Master, hold up my hands with the marks of hard work upon them, than that my Master should hold up His hands before the Church, and say, “these are the wounds which I received in the house of my friends.”

I.—*It is incumbent upon all members of the Church carefully to consider what will be the effect of their actions upon the Gospel of Christ.* If all members of the visible church joined it with the one end of glorifying God, and advancing the kingdom of Jesus, it would be unnecessary to make this remark. To advance the interest of that kingdom would be universally accepted as a matter of course, and the conscience would become so sensitive, that we should be impelled straight onwards to this great and noble end. Our observation and experience, however, attest the fact, that the motives under which men join themselves to the company of the believers are of a very mixed kind. The eye is not single, and hence the body is not full of light. Are we not at liberty, it may be asked, to join the Church of Christ with the view of adding to our own comfort, and to our own enjoyment, or for the purpose of experiencing, in the society of men of sanctified nature, a safety which could not otherwise be ours? These are merely secondary objects; the one grand object is that to which I have already pointed. Your own views, your own feelings, must not stand in the way of that object, and everything which would hinder the Gospel of Christ must be carefully avoided. Here, I shall suppose, is a man whose profession of the name of Jesus is well known to a considerable circle. An opportunity presents itself, in the course of his business, of adding to his bank account £200, or £300, by some commercial transaction. No man

on the Exchange, or in the market would say that the transaction involved any dishonesty ; the statements made by this professing Christian are within the limits of accuracy ; but, all the same, the advantage could only be gained by what is generally termed "sharp practice," and the transaction, while on the right side in regard to truth, is on the wrong side as regards that high-toned Christian honour which shrinks from shabbiness as it would from the touch of a serpent. Here, then, are two things to be considered, this addition to his means, on the one hand, and the possible result of the "sharp practice" upon the Gospel of Christ. Will it advance or hinder that ? Mindful of his first great object in connecting himself with the church, he says, "It were better, though the sum mentioned above were to be multiplied by ten, to forfeit it all rather than that I should hinder the Gospel of Christ." And it is well that he has resolved upon this course. For, all unknown to him, the man with whom the bargain would have been concluded has been, of late, feeling that the world is not a satisfying portion ; he begins to be tired of its petty chicaneries, and its worship of silver and gold. His heart is yearning for a higher and purer faith than that in which the past days of his life have been spent. While his heart is thus feeling a tenderness which it never felt before, and his hands are lifted in dumb imploring towards the Gospel of Christ, judge what the result would have been, if that

“smart” transaction had taken place. How the Gospel would have been hindered, and the bitter sarcasm of a disappointed heart would have found utterance for itself in some such words as these, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!” The Apostle shows that he cherished a holy dread of even a *seeming* selfishness retarding the Gospel of Him whose he was and whom he served. That spirit of shrinking from the appearance of evil is, in our day, not so much cultivated as it ought to be, or as it used to be, affording another illustration of the words, that “fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”

II.—*Man is the only creature on earth who has power to hinder, for a time, the Gospel of Christ.* There is nothing so mysterious, and at the same time so awful in the nature of man, as the ability which he has of hindering the development of the power of God. This Gospel of Christ, of which the Apostle speaks, is called the “power of God,” and yet the power to hinder the Gospel is predicated of man. The mystery is solved in part only, by the consideration that the Gospel addresses itself to moral agents, who have the power of accepting or of rejecting it, of retarding or of advancing its progress. There is a region of unsolved mystery in the fact that God should *permit* His will to be thwarted, and creatures of a day to place themselves in the position of hindering His cherished purpose. I cannot understand it, unless it be that by His superior

wisdom and power, He converts the hindrance into the actual furtherance of the cause which is so dear to the heart of Jesus. We see something of what I mean taking place in nature. Here is a stream which has taken its rise in some of the mountain ranges of our own country. As it proceeds towards the plain, it gathers volume and power ; at last, in its course, it meets with some obstacle which prevents the waters from flowing freely. The heavy floods of winter come, and the waters that have been kept back sweep before them, in their fierce, raging course, all impediments, and rush on with a more rapid stride, simply because they have been for a time held back. So, behind the hindrances effected by man, the waters of the river of life gather only greater power through years of waiting, and, bursting through the barriers which the pride, and prejudice, and hostility of men have erected, they rush on with redoubled speed towards that glorious consummation which holy seer and bard have sung of—a day when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the whole earth, as the waters cover the great deep.

There are two things which require very specially to be considered by those who hinder the Gospel ; first, the danger which is incurred of being swept into destruction before the rising tide. That hapless swimmer who recently paid the penalty of his rashness was not more utterly weak in the seething whirlpools, and the fierce turmoil of the Niagara

Falls, than is the man who sets himself to hinder the Gospel of Christ, "if once God's wrath begin to burn." An eye-witness to the mad attempt to which I have referred, says, that "just before the swimmer disappeared, he saw him lift his hands, as if in mute appeal, or in acknowledgment, all too late, that the onward rush of the waters was too powerful for him." So it has always been in the mad enterprise of hindering the work of Christ. The imperial purple, and the imperial sceptre are as nothing here. "O Nazarene, Thou hast conquered!" cried the emperor Julian, as he sank beneath the waters of death. For this he had fought, with this result he had battled, that he, with an empire's force behind him, and with wit, and learning, and philosophy, had, at last, to throw up his hands, and own in that one cry, that He who, when on earth, had not where to lay His head, was mightier than himself. Man, or men, or system—it is all one. Wisely said the great German reformer, "If it were I, Martin Luther, and the Pope of Rome who had to fight it out, I might well despair; but, if it be the Pope of Rome against me, Martin Luther, AND Martin Luther's God, then woe be to Antichrist!" That, then, is one of the two things which requires, in this matter, to be specially considered; the other is, that these attempts to hinder the Gospel are sometimes viewed by Christ Himself with a feeling of wondering pity. He knows that the decree has passed the lips of the Eternal Father,

“I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” How utterly fruitless must the opposition which men offer to the progress of His cause seem in His eyes! It is this, in part, which accounts for the pity which He feels in connection with all such abortive efforts. When He met Saul of Tarsus as he was going down to Damascus, “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord,” it was not with words of wrath, it was not with God’s terrible laugh of scorn and contempt which David, in the second Psalm, speaks of, but with an infinite pitifulness which quenched the fierce passion of the persecutor’s hate. “It is hard for *thee* to kick against the pricks; not for *Me*, *I* can bear it, but as for thee, hailing men and women to prison, and endeavouring to get them to blaspheme My name—for thee it is indeed hard!” Then, the waters of blessing, and of life swept him, not into the whirlpool of destruction, as they might have done, but carried him on their bosom into the arms of One regarding whom he says, years after, “Now unto the King Eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen.”

III. *This hindering of the Gospel of Christ is not confined to the enemies of Jesus, it is effected sometimes by His professed friends.*—In a country such as this, the world has a sufficiently accurate knowledge of what history demands of those who profess to be

its followers, to be able to mark, and to employ, for its own purposes, these divergences from its precepts to which I refer. The Gospel can make headway against persecution, however fierce; but it cannot make headway against the inconsistencies of its own members. It is long since the apothegm was uttered by Jesus, "a house divided against itself cannot stand." If our life be spent partly in professing to be for Christ, but really in hindering the Gospel, what effect can such a life have in advancing the kingdom for whose advent we pray daily? It is not permissible for the Gospel to make progress, as other systems have done, by the sword. The religion of the false prophet, when it swept over Asia, and part of Europe, presented to the tribes whom it encountered, only two alternatives—"embrace the faith of Islam, or die by the sword." From amidst the sorrow of Gethsemane comes a voice which the quick ear of faith knows to be that of Jesus, "Put up, again, thy sword into his place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Whenever that divine injunction has been forgotten, and the church has unsheathed the sword, it has only been to cut her own hand, and to throw back for years the work of Jesus. His Gospel advances by arguments addressed to the reason, and to the intellect, and by appeals now of love, and again of threatening addressed to the conscience, and to the heart. These arguments and appeals have, in almost every case, a bearing upon the character and position not

only of man, but also of God. I know nothing, for instance, of greater importance for one who seeks to advance the Gospel of Jesus, than to present to his fellowmen the character of God *in equipoise*. We live in an age when the evangelistic work of the Church receives a greater amount of attention than it has done for years past. With some of those who are engaged in that work, the love, and the mercy of God, form almost, if not altogether, the one theme of their discourse. But, that great truth may be so presented as to hinder the very work which it is intended to advance. You may so speak of the mercy of God as to lead the impenitent to trade upon it, and to regard it as something to be discounted, after the following manner: "If God be so merciful, it will not matter for a year or two, or for all the years of one's life, whether we turn to Him or not. He knows that we meant at *some* time to turn to Him." On the other hand, you may so caricature the *justice* of God, and may so present His righteousness, as to lead men to regard Him only as a kind of stern fate, looking upon this world which He has made, and the creatures which are in it, with the fixed, stony gaze of an Egyptian sphinx. Do you thereby advance the Gospel of Christ? No, verily! You thereby repel the penitent, and raise up between him and his return to God, a barrier which may not be removed for years. Several years ago—but quite within my own recollection—there was prevalent in many of our Presbyterian

pulpits a mode of presenting the elective purpose of God, and the power of man in reference to the acceptance of the Gospel, which I feel persuaded proved in many cases a great hindrance to the cause of Christ. You cannot wonder if the declaration that man was altogether impotent in regard to spiritual things—was, in fact, like a log or stone—followed up by impassioned entreaties for the hearers to come to Jesus, produced in the minds of the young, especially, the feeling, that a God who could speak, and act so inconsistently, was not a Being whom they could either reverence or love. To my own knowledge, such teaching resulted, not unfrequently, in a scepticism and infidelity which only yielded when the individual was made to realise the fact of his own responsibility in the sight of God, for the acceptance or rejection of the offered mercy. If you wish the Gospel of Christ not to be hindered, do not impute to God conduct which the moral instincts of men feel to be unrighteous and unjust.

2. *By the absence of a high-toned spirituality.*—When you go to the root of the matter as regards spirituality, it is simply the being filled with the spirit of God. It becomes one of the most serious questions, why every believer and every Church should not be filled with the spirit? Christ has died, and has ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, in order that He may be in a position to give the Holy Spirit; Christ has pro-

mised the Holy Spirit to His Church, and there is nothing that the spirit of God delights in more, than to dwell in the heart of the believer, to sanctify, to enlighten, and to strengthen. The question, therefore, will not be denied an answer, why should the spirituality of which I speak, be so often, and so lamentably deficient? Why should the Church, instead of mounting upwards, lie in the dust; her wings, which should be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, as if she were lying among the pots; her feathers, which should be as feathers covered with yellow gold, covered with the dust and defilement of earth? The fault lies altogether with ourselves. In the days when the Church was filled with the spirit, the members of it continued daily in prayer and supplication; their affection for each other was tender and true; in a word, their whole heart was opened to receive the blessed sunshine of him whom Christ had spoken of as the Paraclete. And what was the consequence to the Church itself, and to the world? Christian life in these days was full of joy, and of energy; "the joy of the Lord" was its strength. The members of the Church were, for the most part, poor; but paradoxical though it may seem, they were possessed of riches such as the Cæsars had never dreamt of; and, as for the world, half in wonder, half in fear, before this newly discovered force, many of its votaries turned with a whole-hearted love to Him who declared that if He were lifted up He would

draw all men unto Him ; and there were added daily unto the Church of them that were being saved. We shall never have, as it seems to me, the return of this golden age, till we understand that a Church does not depend for power upon her wealth, nor upon the external trappings of ecclesiastical millinery, but upon the amount of real spiritual life which she develops. It is a shame, and a sin to us, that there should be any such lack of spiritual life in the Church of Christ as to hinder His Gospel. The promise and assurance of the gift of the Holy Spirit is not conditional, it is *absolute*. "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give the spirit unto them that ask Him ?" We hear complaints on many sides of the slow progress which Christianity is making ; at one time, men say, it advanced by leaps and bounds, but now it has lost its spring and force ; unquestionably, if we have lost in any degree our spirituality, in that proportion we are hindering the Gospel ; in that proportion we have lost the main-spring of our power. In no aspect is the responsibility of the Church for this state of affairs greater, than in respect to the schisms and divisions which repel the spirit of God, and which sap the Church's strength and courage. Her energies are being turned from the grand end of working together with God for the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, to the paltry ends of denominational rivalries, and

the poor ambition of having more splendid ecclesiastical edifices, and larger communion rolls than her neighbours have. What good can ever come from this state of things? Who that has the power of reasoning can ever expect that the world will be won to Christ by such exhibitions as these? So long as this continues, it is not strange that the impression made upon the lapsed masses in our large towns and cities is next to nothing, and that the carelessness and indifference of our rural population—very notably of those, men and women, who are engaged in agricultural service—is becoming year by year more and more confirmed. The mocking laugh of the world is heard in the question, “Where is your God now gone?” We can only in part give the answer of the old Hebrew psalm—“Our God is in the heavens.” We cannot say, “What pleased Him he hath done.” No! What displeases *Him*, *we* have done, and hence the Spirit is withheld; hence the spirituality of the Church is at a low ebb. What the Church requires, in order that the Gospel of Christ may not only not be hindered, but may be advanced beyond our largest hopes and prayers, is a band of men whose lives have silently grown beautiful, through close and frequent contact with God—spiritual men, who will give God no rest till “He has sent forth His salvation like brightness, and as a lamp that burneth.”

III. *By the want of Missionary zeal on the part of members of the Church.*—That this was a question in

which Paul was deeply interested requires neither demonstration nor proof. The name by which he is so frequently spoken of abundantly attests the fact,—“Paul, the missionary of the Gentiles.” It is a remarkable illustration of how words become stereotyped in their application, that we so seldom speak of Paul as a “*missionary*,” and so frequently use the words, “the *Apostle* of the Gentiles,” forgetting that the word “missionary” is simply the latinised form of the word “Apostle.” The New Testament church, as instituted by Christ, was emphatically a *missionary* church. The last words which He addressed to the eleven missionaries who were to carry the standard of the cross into the palaces of kings, and into the huts of peasants, who were to have the whole world as their diocese, were, “Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” It was in the execution of this high behest that Paul, though as one born out of due time, and, therefore, receiving in his case a renewal of the commission, was sent “far thence, unto the Gentiles.” With him there was not only the desire that the Gospel of Christ should not be hindered, but this desire, springing out of the intense conviction that the happiness of the human race was bound up in and with that Gospel. If, even in this nineteenth century, the world stands much in need of the Gospel of Christ, what must it have been in the days when Paul wrote the words of

my text? Turn in whatever direction he might—east or west, north or south, the horror of a great spiritual darkness rested upon the sons of men. Rome, with its iron sway, crushed the life out of national liberties—she made the countries which she vanquished and over-ran, deserts, and called that performance by the name of peace. In the imperial city, violence, debauchery, sensuality of the grossest kind, held high revel: the palace being the centre from which issued streams, compared with which the fetid waters of a common sewer were purity itself. The barbaric tribes of Germany and of Britain, and the more polished, but equally debased countries of the East, lay under the spell of darkness and sin, and spiritual death. Was it possible for any one in the position of Paul to look upon all this, to view the reign of superstition and sensuality, even in Athens, and his spirit not be deeply moved? Of all the parts of the Lord's Prayer which Paul used day by day, the petition that had the special honour of repetition would be this, "Thy kingdom come." Of all things that Paul feared and dreaded, this stood out as the most prominent, "lest he should hinder the Gospel of Christ." By no method could he more signally have hindered this Gospel than by ceasing to be interested in his work as a missionary. With all the centuries that have passed since Paul expressed his dread of hindering the Gospel, the missionary duty of the church has not become less urgent; so long as there is on

God's footstool one member of our race who has not heard of the Saviour, Christ the Lord, the Gospel has not fulfilled its high and glorious mission. So long as, from Macedonia, or from any part of the world, the cry arises, "Come over and help us," I hold that the church to her last man, and to her last shilling is bound to hear and to respond. Did Christ leave the father's bosom, and give Himself to death for us, that His Gospel might have free course, and shall we, bought by His blood, ransomed from the slavery of sin with a great price, say, "I pray thee have me excused?" Have we ourselves derived so small advantage from the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, that it is a matter of indifference whether or not the perishing thousands around us shall derive from this source life and healing? Has God loved the world so much, and do we love it so little, that we do not care whether or not we hinder the Gospel, which is God's loving and infallible device for the salvation of the world? From all hearts let the cry arise—the cry, the prayer, of the oldest missionary hymn in the world, "God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. That Thy way may be known upon the earth, Thy saving health among all nations."

"Blessed and holy THREE
Glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might:
Boundless as ocean's tide
Rolling in fullest pride,
Through the earth, far and wide,
Let there be light."

SICUT COLUBER.

“Temperance is a bridle of gold : he who uses it rightly is more like a god than a man.”—BURTON.

LAMENTATIONS iv. 2.—“The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter !”

THIS is the voice of one crying in the wilderness—a wilderness which sin has caused, and on which desolation and death have wrought their terrible work. It had not always been a wilderness ; once it had been a fair garden, a very paradise of God, but now, “the Lord had covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger, and cast down from heaven to earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not His footstool in the day of His anger.” If ever a nation had cause to look back with anguished heart upon the past, to remember with deepest sorrow many opportunities for ever passed away, that nation was Israel, whose prophet sits amidst the ruins of her former greatness, and with choking utterance, and smitten soul, pours out his plaint into the ear of Israel’s God. An old lyric

poet of Greece takes up his lyre, and strives to bring out the martial notes of war, but the harp sounds of love alone ; this son of the priest of Anathoth, also, takes up the lyre, and every time its strings are touched, the monotone of pain and of deepest sorrow breaks forth, and his sighs, and his tears, and his voice all join in the sad cadences of an anguished soul, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people !" The bitterest drop in the cup of his sorrow came from the mournful fact mentioned in the text—that the precious sons of Zion should have fallen so low. Looking back upon the past, he can perceive the various elements which have conspired to effect this terrible change. Rebellion against the God of Israel, idolatrous alliances, luxury, and oppression, and, mingling with them all, another element which a brother-prophet had pointed out, and rebuked with all the earnestness of a man of God, "They also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way ; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink, they err in vision, they stumble in judgment ; for all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean." With a foe so potent working his destructive work among the sons of Zion, one is at no loss to comprehend how the fine gold should become dim, and the

most fine gold be changed, and how the stones of the sanctuary should be poured out in the top of every street. To the patriot, loving his country, and having no higher earthly joy than that peace should be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces, it was the saddest sight of all, to mark the ruin which had been effected in the church of the living God, by the powerful enemies to which I have referred, and, most of all, by that enemy to which the son of Amos points in language whose homeliness is lost sight of in the graphic nature of the words.

After more than twenty centuries have passed, this great foe is still in all our churches, producing, upon the sons of Zion, results identical in their nature with those which called forth the lamentation of the son of Hilkiah. This matter is only beginning to awaken the sympathies, and the efforts of the ministry, and membership of the church. We have had in Scotland many seasons of quickened interest, and of revival in reference to divine things. We can look back upon crowded meetings for prayer, and we can remember one distinctive feature of these meetings, which bears with touching interest upon the subject of this discourse. Out of all the petitions presented on behalf of those standing outside of the Christian Church, was there any class so numerous as those for men and women, who, having once been members of the church—sons and daughters of Zion—had, through

strong drink, fallen from the paths of sobriety, of industry, of virtue? Among all the foes with which we had to contend in these days, was there any one so hard to overcome, any one that stood up against the soldiers of the cross with a front so brazen and shameless, as this of strong drink? Did we not find ourselves engaged in a deadly grapple with this monster evil, which sought to thwart our efforts in a way that no other vice could? And even now, where there is lamentation over broken vows, over men and women who professed to have given themselves to Jesus, and who have returned to the old ungodliness, is not this sad falling away to be traced, in most cases, to the power of this great temptation? If this be not a mere picture drawn from imagination, but one of the saddest of realities, is it not time that the church of Jesus Christ were rising in all its God-given strength, marching to the conquest of this mighty foe, and inscribing upon the banner which has waved in triumph over many a stricken battle-field, this other victory which will make the sons of Zion once more comparable to fine gold.

I.—That we may the better understand the greatness of the evil sought to be remedied, I shall, first of all, speak of the grandeur and high dignity of those who come to be “esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter.” They are the precious sons of Zion, and their preciousness is brought out by that to which they are compared—

“fine gold.” In estimating the preciousness of an object, we generally enquire *what it has cost*. Tried by this test, there should be no object on earth so precious as these sons of Zion. They have formed the subject of thought to that Divine mind, whose thoughts are characterised by the Psalmist as a great deep; they have formed the subject of action to the glorious Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; for them, the Eternal Son of the Eternal God, veiled for a while His glory, took upon Himself the form of a servant, and did, what might to all eternity have been deemed an impossibility—if it had not become a sober fact in history—laid down His life upon the tree of shame. Gold, in comparison with such a surpassingly wonderful purchase-price, is not to be once spoken of. “Ye were not redeemed with such corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” Precious blood, for precious sons of Zion!

Shall we try this question by another test? *How are these sons of Zion regarded by Him whose property they are?* Are they not in His sight exceeding precious? All precious things, all lovely, and beautiful things, all strong, and masterful things are brought together into one glittering mountain of speech, to bring out how dear and precious they are to Him. They are as the sun in his noonday strength, as the fair moon in the sky of his love, as the bride in robes with needle wrought, as the jewels of His crown, as the flowers in His garden of

delights, as the shining stars in the world's dark night; they are His army, the army of the Lord of Hosts, terrible with banners. *Are they not precious?* Think of the use that God has made of them. By means of them He has shown to this world, which has broken away from its allegiance, the beauty and the power of a higher life, even an heavenly. He has adorned the annals of the world with illustrations of the loftiest heroism, and with the beauty of a self-denying, self-sacrificing Christianity. With them as fellow workers, He has marched against the strongholds of heathen superstition and cruelty, and has levelled with the ground the frowning bulwarks of sin. O sons of Zion, O church of the living God, what a noble history thine has been, and how, through blood, and tears, and martyr-fires, and prayers, and a high resoluteness of heart, thou has risen to stand foremost in all the world for what is right, and true, and holy! Indeed thou art comparable to fine gold, gold that will form the diadem, one day, of Him who sits upon the throne that is high and lifted up, and whose train fills the temple.

Such is God's ideal of the Church, and such is the high estimate which He forms of her. It is not yet realised, but it will be, when, amidst the pealing hallelujahs of angels, and of ransomed men, the Son of God, the Elder Brother of all redeemed ones, shall proclaim from His glorious throne, the words, "Holy as God is holy, and pure as God is pure."

What hinders the realisation of this lofty ideal? How comes it that they who should be comparable to fine gold, are, in so many cases, esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter? I shall not say that the drinking customs of the present day are the *sole* cause of loss to the Church, and of damage to the sons of Zion. I know that worldliness, that the spirit of self, that the seductions of vice, do all play their part in dimming the fine gold; but, let the loss to the Church from these, and such like sources, be put on the one side, and the injury to the sons of Zion from strong drink be placed upon the other, and the latter stands out as a great, frowning mountain, while the former assumes only the appearance of a hill. We are met at every point by this fertile source of deterioration, our work in all directions is hampered by it, and the enemies of the church herself are weakened thereby. I have never yet met with a Christian man, whose heart was in the work of reclaiming the home heathen, who has not, at the same time, avowed his belief that the curse of strong drink lay at the root of the fact, that thousands have fallen into such depths of abasement as to render it all but hopeless that they can ever be won for Christ, till the temptations that beset their path are removed, or reduced, and the habit of intemperance subdued. Devoted Sabbath School teachers, giving themselves to one of the highest works which the Christian Church knows, the feeding, namely, of

Christ's lambs, weep like Rachel, and refuse to be comforted, because their children are not, or because the smiling innocence of youth is corrupted, and changed into the drivelling idiocy of the drunkard, old before his time. I have before my mind at this moment, a young man who, in all the glad activity of youth, with genius, and sanctified talent, gave himself, a quarter of a century ago, to the noble work of preaching Christ crucified to the perishing heathen. He returned to home and kindred, his hair whitened, his brow furrowed with many a care, and his heart wounded by many a sorrow, and stood up before a great crowd of Christian men, narrating the great things that the Lord had done by him, but ended his appeal with the heart breaking declaration, that in many parts of India the words, "drunkard" and "Christian," had become among the natives synonymous terms. I am convinced that there is not in this country one Christian minister who has not again and again had cause to mourn over high hopes blasted, and fond expectations in reference to members of his flock, thrown down by the power of this subtle tempter. Sons of the prophets, whose career promised to be of the brightest, and whose talents gave the hope of noble and glorious work for Jesus, have died covered with the shame and ingloriousness of a drunkard's end. Nay, the pulpit, dedicated to the consideration and the forthsetting of the most glorious theme that can engage the thoughts of angels or of men, has fallen

in many trying cases, before the blasting power of that through which prophet and priest of old erred in vision, and stumbled in judgment. I know, that this is a terrible arraignment; the indictment contains many counts, and under each there are particulars which might make an angel weep. There are broken hearts, and ruined hopes, and death-stricken children, and raving maniacs. And, O worst and darkest thing of all, a sanctuary defiled, and the sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, becoming as earthen pitchers! But, terrible as the arraignment is, I am conscious that it contains but a dim outline of the sad effects springing to the church from the evil which we so deeply deplore.

I have said, that not only is the work of the church hampered and impeded, but the energy of the church *for* her work is impeded. If it be true that the silver and the gold are the Lord's, then the highest of all ends to which money can be devoted is the church's work. That work contemplates nothing short of winning the world for Christ, and setting upon the brow of Jesus the crown of universal dominion. Whatever is withdrawn from this end, must be able to plead the support, the comforts, the refinements of life, or the high objects of education. It is a question of gravest moment which I now propose to the Christian conscience, how comes it that constant and piteous appeals require to be made for the support of the church's work at home, and abroad, for the needy poor, for the infirm and

aged, for infirmaries and hospitals, for the whole machinery of the church's beneficent operations? Can the question be answered in any other way than this, that a very large proportion of what *should* find its way into the treasury of Jesus is wilfully, I shall even say sinfully, expended upon that which the most enlightened science of the present day affirms to be not only unnecessary for the healthy human body, but positively injurious, and which the eye of all Christendom, and of Him who is Christendom's Lord, sees to be sapping the working power of the church. If but a tithe of what is expended annually upon strong drink were given for the extension of the Gospel of Jesus, we should have a new heaven and a new earth. Were the sums expended by professing Christians upon this enemy to the church's power, placed at the disposal of those who are interested in the church's work, "the wilderness and the solitary place would be glad for them, and the desert would rejoice, and blossom as the rose; we should see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."

The enemy against which the church has to contend is strong; and, being entrenched behind a parapet of prejudice, of evil desire, of pecuniary interest, it requires strong men to carry on the siege, and force their way, at last, through the deadly breach. Those who are interested in the martial glory of Britain, and who desire to see her old renown in arms maintained, have recently been sound-

ing the alarm on account of the physical deterioration of those who are slowly filling up the ranks of the army. I profess myself to have an interest in such a question as this; but the church has a deeper interest still, in the kind of men who are to fight the good fight of holiness against sin. One thing that fills me with anxiety for the church, is the weakened power for God even of Christian men who refuse to cast themselves into this movement of abstinence from intoxicating drinks. I cannot exempt from the grounds of this alarm the Christian ministry. The power of this, the most honourable office in the Christian Church, is lessened tremendously by the neglect of what even the most cursory observation reveals to us, namely, that one in vain pleads with the poor inebriate, or deals by the most affectionate appeals with those who are falling under the power of strong drink, if the retort can be made that he has not himself banished from side-board and table, from social and ecclesiastical gathering, the temptation before which so many of Zion's sons have fallen. The Christian elder wilfully permits his power for good to run to waste, who does not, in dealing with temperance, say, "Come," instead of "Go." I have admired in many things the practical sagacity of that great Evangelist who a few years ago was labouring among us, but I never felt more certain that he was in the right than when he discharged from attendance and from work in the enquiry-room, the man whose breath

gave evidence of the fact that he had been tampering with the great enemy of souls. A church potent for good, and a church working up to the full measure of its strength, we shall never have, till this source of weakened power and energy is removed from the midst of us.

What I have said under this head of my discourse may all along have been meeting mentally with the objection, "it is nothing new;" and, if my hope of success in pleading this cause depended upon the novelty of the facts stated; I must have yielded to despondency. Sin is an old thing now, and this particular form of it is not much younger than sin itself. But what may, to some minds, prove a cause of withholding their assent, or, what is even worse, giving that kind of assent which is simply the precursor of a continued and easy indifference, may on some other minds produce a most desirable result. The cumulative force of testimony running, without a single exception, in the one direction, must, one may be permitted to hope, produce at length an impression upon the minds of men. Though it *be* true that the heart at times takes its revenge upon truths which the head has been forced to admit, by starving them into an inoperative quiescence, yet, at times there is an awakening to a sense of the wrong and injury effected by a neglect of some great truth. And, such an awakening, I am inclined to believe, is taking place around us, so far as the church of God is concerned. I cannot recollect a time when this great

question of temperance, in connection with the church's work, has been so faithfully brought before the minds of the church's members and office-bearers, nor a time in which, by almost universal consent, the necessity is admitted of the church girding on her armour of light, and grappling in earnest with the giant foe. This, I hold, is a thing of good augury, that the moment the sons of Zion are quickened and revived, forthwith the impossibility of the church remaining quiescent in reference to this great evil is acknowledged. Already, through the ranks of the sons of God, as they close up, are the words muttered now as a prayer, and again as a vow, "Let us come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

It now remains that I should advert to the mode in which the reproach is to be removed, and the fine gold is to recover its pristine lustre, while the song that was sung of old in Judah, shall be surely once more sung in Zion,—“Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” Primarily, and in advance of all remedial measures, there must be still more urgent prayer, prayer that will take no denial—for the outpouring of the spirit of God. When Paul wishes to set before the Church of Ephesus the highest type of a son of God, he uses these striking words, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit.” Another impletion of the Holy Ghost,

such as made Pentecost a day memorable in the history of the Church, is emphatically what is needed. The praying men and women among us must give no rest till God make His sons what He designs them to be—a praise in all the earth. I urge this the more, because I have never found it to be otherwise, than that a revival of true religion in the church always means a revival of true temperance sentiment as its outcome. The showers of blessing that have fallen of late upon many churches, confirm me in the belief, that the sober portion of the community should, for the increase of their own spiritual power, act in a spirit of self-denial, and rather than prove a stumbling block in the way of the weak, make up their mind that they will not drink wine while the world stands. Let one loud cry, let one united, fervent prayer go up from the Church for the outpouring of the Spirit; let but that prayer be heard, and the work is done.

I regard the Church herself as the great temperance worker of the future. It has been to the loss of this great cause that, owing to the callous indifference of the past, temperance has had to so large an extent to be carried on *outside* of the Church. Not all the semi-political organisations for the lessening and abolition of strong drink, not all the societies which are advancing this great work, can avail in the conflict that is upon us, as the Church of Christ can do. The words that were

uttered thirty years ago by an honoured servant of Jesus who has fallen asleep—the late Dr Albert Barnes, of Philadelphia—are words of wisdom and of truth :—“There is no evil in the land which the Church, if united, might not remove ; there is no form of wrong which could be maintained out of the Church, if it did not find patronage in it ; and there is no good cause which ought not to secure the hearty co-operation of every minister of religion, and every member of a Christian Church. . . . Neither war, nor pestilence, nor famine, have cut down so many sons of the Church, baptised in the name of Jesus, and consecrated by prayer to the service of the Lord. The Egyptians, from a sense of gratitude, worshipped Ibis, on account of the benefits it conferred in destroying the crocodile, and if there is any one thing under heaven that a Christian should regard with more gratitude than any other thing, it is the cause of temperance, for its agency in destroying a monster whose poison “outvenoms all the worms of the Nile.” *The temperance cause makes no infidels*, no atheists, no sceptics, no profane men, no Sabbath-breakers, no deriders of the Bible. It lays no sacrilegious hand upon the altars of God, breaks up no assemblies for worship, disbands no Sabbath-schools, and disrobes none of the ministers of religion. It comes in all modesty and earnestness of heart, and lays its hand beseechingly upon the priestly garments of the sons of God, and entreats them, “if there be any con-

solation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies," to come to the rescue of a land in which Satan, through strong drink, is holding deadly revel. The temperance cause makes no pretensions to being another Gospel, knowing as it does that there is but *one*, and that *its* foundations has been laid, broad, and strong, and deep, at the Cross of Calvary. It professes not to be the soul's quiet haven from the unrest and trouble of sin, but, content with the lowly place of a handmaiden, avowing its determination to be rather a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to dwell in tents of sin, it asks you sons of Zion to give it place and room among your varied schemes for the elevation of the sons of men. It beseeches the ministers of the Gospel to lead in the van, conceding to them the place which their high office demands, and entreating them, as they value the souls of the perishing, to help it in its noble work. It pleads with you, O sons of Zion, by many a ruined, drink-cursed home, by many a starving wife, by many a mourning mother, by many a father moaning in the bitterness of his heavy grief, "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, my son." Shall these voices plead in vain? Shall not the heart, the great loving heart of the Church, wide enough to embrace every child of Adam, respond to the thrilling appeal? I can see no escape from it; its claims *must* be granted, its words *must* be heard. He is no true son of Zion who, knowing

all this, turns him upon the couch of selfish indulgence, and says, as he drops off into sleep, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Here, indeed, he *may* say it, but I challenge him to utter the words, when standing before the great white throne. He dare not, he cannot say it. With Him, the Elder Brother of all the true sons of Sion, seated upon His throne of judgment, appearing visibly in that glorified human nature which makes him kin to us, he dare not say it. Sons of Zion! Rouse yourselves for the battle; let not the mocking foe point to you as "earthen vessels, the work of the potter," when, you should be known as fine gold, precious in the Lord's eyes, and honourable.

It must no longer be looked upon as a cause of wonder that one jail chaplain should aver that 50 per cent. of the persons in the gaol come from Sunday Schools; another, that 70 per cent. come from the same source. True, these may be extreme cases, but putting it at the very lowest, it cannot be denied that a large proportion of those who have occupied the benches of our Sabbath-schools fall before the tempter; nor is it unreasonable to believe that the same lamentable results will follow, until the sons of Zion arise to a fuller sense of their duty in this respect. Upon them depends, under God, what shall be, ten years hence, the prevailing characteristics of our churches, whether they shall be fully equipped for good work, or whether they shall have driven the unclean thing beyond their borders,

and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. The Christian workers of the future, in order to impress the world, must be temperance workers, and in order to make them so, the church must give greater attention than she has hitherto done to the work. It must become as much a matter of teaching in our Sabbath Schools, "that wine is a mocker, that strong drink is raging, and that whoso is deceived thereby is not wise," as it is, that parents must be honoured and obeyed, and that honesty and truth must be practised. I frankly confess that my great hope in connection with the Temperance movement lies almost entirely in the direction of the Church of God operating upon the young. I have looked for years with a favourable eye upon suggestions in the direction of political action, leading to the restriction and ultimate abolition of the traffic in strong drink. I have marked, with increasing joy, the progress of such an institution as the Scottish Temperance League, and of the Good Templar organisation, which combines, with political action, the practical work of abstinence on the part of the individual, but not any one of these, nor all of them combined, can ever have the influence which the well and wisely directed efforts of the Church of Christ, acting through its Church Courts and its Congregations, and its Sabbath Schools, is fitted to have. "Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there?" asked the prophet Jeremiah. Within your borders,

O sons of Zion, is to be found the balm which will heal the festering sore. Be ye the physicians, bright, and true, and precious as the fine gold, and the world will shake off this drink-curse, and from under your potent, sanctified hands shall rise a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, and "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever."

METAMORPHOSIS.

“ . . . When the Christian's eyelid drops and closes,
In nature's parting strife,
A friendly angel stands where he reposes,
To wake him up to life.

He gives a gentle blow, and so releases
The spirit from its clay,
From sin's temptations, and from life's distresses,
He bids it come away.

It rises up, and from its darksome mansion,
It takes its silent flight,
And feels its freedom in the large expansion
Of heavenly air and light.”

BURNS (J. D.)

PHILIPPIANS iii. 20-21.—“ . . . The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

HAVE you observed that neither Paul nor any of the inspired writers ever tarry long in the mere presence of death, considered *as* death? It is not with them, as with many writers of our own day, who attempt to work upon the heart by the mere sentiment of grief. From Genesis to the Apocalypse you will

not find, even though you collected into one page all that is said of the body after it has become untenanted by the soul, one half as much of what I have now hinted at, as in this one passage from the writings of one whose name was once in the mouths of all. . . .

“He who hath bent him o’er the dead
’Ere the first day of death is fled,
The first dark day of nothingness,
The last of danger and distress,
Before decay’s effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers,
And marked the mild angelic air,
The rapture of repose that’s there,
The fixed yet tender traits that streak
The langour of the placid cheek ;
And, but for that sad shrouded eye
That fires not—wins not—weeps not now.
And but for that chill, changeless brow
Whose touch thrills with mortality—
Some moments, aye, one treacherous hour,
He might still doubt the tyrant’s power,
So fair, so calm, so softly sealed,
The first, last look by death revealed.”

The heart that is under the spell of recent sorrow, through bereavement, says, “How touching, how beautiful, how true!” And one begins to wonder that the Bible, which touches our many-sided humanity with its joys and its sorrows, with its alternations of fear and of hope, should have ignored

such a feeling as this, which at some time or other finds a place in human hearts, and at some time or other finds vent for itself, either in sighs or tears, or in the dumb, stricken look of appeal from a face of almost angel beauty up to God—one wonders, I say, that the Bible should say nothing of all this. But, it may be said, men like Paul are not men of such tender feeling, of such deep sympathy with the poetical side of sorrow, as are men like him whose words I have just quoted. I feel sure that, let the explanation lie where it will, it does not lie there. There never was a heart so woman-like in its deep tenderness of feeling, as he who said to the weeping elders of Ephesus, “And now, behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God shall see my face no more;” never a heart more full of tender sympathy than his who said, “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” And, putting them all aside, think of Him whose words make the Bible so luminous with hope and joy. He who had sounded all depths of sorrow, whose nature, human and divine, is steeped in love, who was Himself love’s highest incarnation, is it not marvellous that He should make so little of the death of the body as a means of exciting men to a higher purpose, by touching the feelings of their heart, where these feelings are most sensitive and keen? In a little sea-side town of Galilee he stands

one day by the dead body of a young girl some twelve years of age, and looks upon the work that death has wrought, but never one word like those which I have quoted from the poet proceed from His lips. How are we to explain all this? Want of sympathy, want of tenderness, want of true poetic feeling in connection with the sad and touching separation of the soul from the body? It cannot be. This is my explanation of it. Jesus and Paul, standing by the remains of the well-beloved, do not see death so much as life; they do not think of time so much as of the calm eternity. *Their* thoughts go forward, *ours* either stand still, or go back; *they* think of what *will* be, *we*, of what now *is*. Look at the text in this light. Paul uses one word in it, which to us in certain moods of mind, and under certain circumstances of trial, is so terribly suggestive of sorrow—"CHANGE." We look back on what was a fortnight since,—life, activity, purpose; and we gaze on what now is death, stillness, unbroken rest, and we say, "Alas! how great the 'change.'" And a loving heart calls up the joyous past, and contrasts it with the sad present. Paul, with a heart as full of love as ours is, stands by the same beloved object, his soul is wrung with sorrow, his eyes are filled with tears, his voice quivers as he speaks, and he, too, utters this word, "change;" but it is at the future, and not at the present he is looking, as he says, "Jesus Christ shall change the body of our humiliation, and fashion it like unto His glorious body." He covers over

gently and lovingly the cold, sweet face of death ; turns his heart, for a moment, towards God, and when he lifts the covering, and folds back the shroud, it is no longer death, but life—no longer corruption but incorruption, no longer humiliation and dishonour, but exaltation and glory. The space of milleniums is travelled over in an instant, the grave is all but ignored, and death has passed into sleep, and the archangel's trumpet has sounded, and all is changed—"Death is swallowed up in victory."

I.

You cannot look at the body of man without at once discovering in it abundant evidence of the glory, the goodness, the wisdom, the love of the Almighty Creator. Its beautiful proportion, its thorough and complete adaptation of means to ends, the sparkling brightness of the eye, the countenance glowing now with pleasure, clouded now with sorrow, and anon contracted by pain, everything about us unites in saying, "the hand that made us is divine." We are forced to utter the words of the devout singer of old : "I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made, marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." And yet with all this, is it not the fact that some of the greatest pangs which human life knows come to it through the body ? It is, while here, through that body so fearfully and wonderfully made, that we feel

mostly the effects of the most humbling thing that the world has ever seen—I mean sin. Take even the most negative aspect of suffering—want of power. How acute the feeling at times is, of worse than weakness, of utter helplessness. One receives tidings of the sickness unto death of some beloved friend, and although but a mile separate the two, yet that one mile is, through want of power, as complete a barrier against seeing and conversing with the beloved object, as though all the distance between this and the antipodes rose up betwixt them. In vain the soul yearns for one word—but one; in vain the heart says, “if this weak hand could but place itself upon the aching, weary brow, or smooth the hair damp with the dew of death!” and with a feeling of utter humiliation we look upon the body that so clogs the wings of the will, and makes the heaven-born soul altogether impotent. “The body of our humiliation!” True it is that, when disease lays its hand upon it, and renders us so weak that all has to be done for us—that the cup of water has to be held by the hand of another, that the drop of wine has to be raised by other hands than our own to the parched lips, and offices even of love performed for us, that we, when in strength, and health, would have shrunk from another doing on our behalf; and to mark how, day by day, and hour by hour, the fair temple which Almighty skill had raised for an immortal spirit, is having the seal of decay set upon it, and to know that it must ere

long moulder in the dust—how it humbles us! How the strong man becomes weak as an infant under it, and the beautiful lose the glory of their beauty!

The capacity, also, which the body has for the enduring of severe pain forms an element in this humiliation. Like a harp of a thousand strings, there may gush from the body, under the influence of health and prosperity, melody of the loftiest joy; but the humiliation comes, when one knows that from even the least of the nerves of the harp being out of tune, there may rise a wail of bitter pain and anguish. Many a weary heart has groaned out under the bitterness of protracted suffering, “O to be unclothed; to have this agonising burden of pain removed—of pain that humbles us, of pain that tortures us, of pain that draws from the quivering heart the words, ‘if man at his best estate is only vanity, what is he now, when to live is to suffer, when to breathe is to feel exquisite pain?’”

And then the gloomy circle of sin's effects is not completed, so far as this body goes, till the most humbling of all events takes place—*Death*. As that touches the body, and the body only, it is mainly from this point of view that the Apostle calls it “the body of our humiliation.” And is it not an humbling sight to look upon the jewel-casket of a prince, rifled of its gleaming, precious stones, and thrown by some careless hand into the dust? And here is the casket in which a more precious gem than ever decked

monarch's crown, erewhile lay. The jewel is gone beyond our sight, beyond our ken even, and all that the eye can rest upon is humiliation, "the body of our humiliation." But I will not dwell upon that, so long as there is something better and more ennobling to look at. I wish to get away from this scene of humiliation. Like Jesus, and like Paul, I cannot stand long by the side of the dead body. If change is to be spoken of, then let it be change of another kind than that which draws from fainting hearts the moaning of a deep sorrow, for we must never forget that this tenement of clay does not belong to death, but to Him that has conquered death; that it is, in fact, Christ's dead body, redeemed, adopted, sanctified by Himself.

II.

*"That the adoption of the body of the believer, no less than that of the soul, forms an integral part of the work which Christ accomplished on the cross.—*When we speak and write about the salvation that flows from the finished work of Jesus, we are, I believe, too much inclined to think of it only in connection with the soul. We are not soul or spirit alone, man has a body no less than a soul. Jesus has redeemed *men*; not spirits only, not bodies only, but body and soul together, as making up the members of our race. Thus we find the Apostle bringing the highest spiritual blessings of the cross of Jesus into

relation with the whole man. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and *body*, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." One of the most powerful arguments in support of personal purity that is to be found in the Word of God, stands connected with the body of our humiliation: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you? Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." "We wait," says the Apostle, "for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." This adoption, for which we wait, is the same adoption which the child of God has at this moment, but which he has not yet received in its completed form. The particular effects of adoption, as experienced in this world, are on the *soul*. The body does not share in them to the same extent; it falls under the stroke of death; it passes within the silent grave, under the power of corruption. Can it be, then, that one part of the possession is left uncared for, left without a share in that glorious redemption into which the angels desire to look? I do not believe it; the redemption of the body is as certain as the redemption of the soul. Lay it, as you will, in the grave; let it moulder, as it will, into dust, Christ's eye is on it, Christ has not forgotten it. We may weep over it, in sad and bitter remembrance of a time when the loved form

cheered our dwelling like the blessed sunshine ; we may bury our dead out of our sight, and lay the green sod upon a breast that throbs no more with hope or joy, or love, but let us not forget that, body of humiliation though it be, it is not covered out of the sight of Christ ; that, often as your thoughts turn to the quiet churchyard, and to the seed that you have sown there, the thoughts of Christ turn to it still oftener, for one of the members of His own body lies there. The burial ground is " God's acre," and Christ's acre, too.

" I like that ancient Saxon phrase which calls
The burial-ground God's acre ; it is just,
It consecrates each grave within its walls,
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.

God's acre ! yes, that blessed name imparts
Comfort to those who in the grave have sown
The seed that they had garnered in their hearts,
Their bread of life, alas ! no more their own."

I would as soon believe that the blood of Christ was shed in vain for the soul, as that it was shed in vain for the body of the believer. Of old, in Palestine, a loving mother at the beginning of barley-harvest took her place upon a rock, and day and night her eyes were fixed upon the spot where lay the mouldering remains of her two dead sons ; " and she suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night." I cannot wonder at this ; it was like a woman's, like

a mother's heart. Can we think that He who has presented His love as passing that of women,—that He who hath said, “Can a woman forget her child that she should not have compassion upon the fruit of her womb?—Yea! she may forget, yet will not I forget thee,”—Can we think, I ask, that He will forget to watch over that which, though sown in corruption, will be raised incorruptible; which, though it be the body of our humiliation, is none the less a member of Himself? It is a cold and cheerless theology which gives a negation to all these questionings of the tried heart; it is not the theology of Paul, it is not the theology of the Bible, and its spirit is the very opposite of that which says, “Thy dead men shall live, *my dead body* shall they raise; awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”

That I am not making too much of this point will, I think, be evident if we bear in mind that the Word of God speaks to us more frequently and more fully of the hereafter of the body, especially in connection with the resurrection, than it does of the soul; that while it does not, in the slightest degree, countenance our lingering, even in thought, upon the lineaments on which death has set his seal, it always encourages us to look at death, when his work has been done upon the body, with the hopefulness, yea, even with the joy of those who ought to know that the body is Christ's redeemed posses-

sion, and will yet be fashioned into the likeness of His own glorious body.

III.

The body, no less than the soul of the believer, shall share in the glory which Christ by His death has purchased for His people.—"Who shall change the body of our humiliation, and fashion it like unto His own glorious body." What an unbounded faith in Jesus this man must have had, to believe, as he looked upon the cold, rigid form of death, that such a thing as this was possible. Neither experience nor sight had to do with it. The future state is always presented in the Bible as encumbered by mystery. Certain statements are made which there is no attempt to explain. Nay, more, that spirit of prying curiosity, which would fain draw back the veil that hides the seen from the unseen, and the future from the present, is uniformly discouraged. We are told, in reference to our dead, and to the body that is sown in dishonour, that we must walk by faith and not by sight. These bodies which we have laid in the grave in the hope of a glorious resurrection, and our own bodies, if we believe in the Son of God, shall yet put on the very likeness of the body of Him who is seated at the right hand of the Father. What a change that will be ; accustomed, as we are, in this transitory and fleeting world, to the idea of change, the mind has not in its loftiest moods formed to itself the idea of a change so great as this.

We find the one day health and vigour, and the next, disease and weakness, and the next again, death, and we say, "What a change!" One day you look upon a man whose will is law, whom millions obey, and whose armies are numbered by tens of thousands; the next you find him a prisoner in the hands of his enemy, his wife a fugitive, his child an exile, and his throne broken and shattered, and the fragments of it the plaything of a ribald mob. How great the change; but it is nothing, absolutely nothing, to the change that will yet take place, when these bodies of ours, frail, perishing, mouldering into dust, shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. And what, it is asked, is the likeness thereof? What skilled limner shall draw its glorious proportions, or shall reproduce the brightness of its glory? Alas! we are like that loved disciple who wept much when he saw that no man could prevail to open the sealed book. We, too, could almost weep as we think that it is denied us to look upon what would make us understand the words of Paul better than many volumes of speculation. It is in vain to weep; let faith come and wipe the tears from the dimmed eyes, and bind up the yearning, crushed heart, and bid us believe, only believe. There are some faint glimmerings of light, however, streaming from the Heaven above, which do, after a sort, reveal to us what we shall be when He shall appear who is our Saviour King. I believe that three men of old beheld, for an hour or

more, the glorified body of Jesus, when He was transfigured before them on Mount Tabor, and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. Who can forget that magnificent description of His glorious body given by one who, having seen Him on the mount of transfiguration, saw Him sixty years after upon the mount of glory:—“His head and his hair were white like wool, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.” Now, this is the glorious fruitage of the precious seed. However pure and happy may be the state of separate spirits, the Scripture teaches us that it is incomplete, and that they, as well as the whole creation, “wait for the manifestation of the sons of God.” “If the spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” It is, then, that Spirit’s work to make the body the fitting tenement of the glorified soul, and no loftier model can be found than the body of Him who is at the right hand of God. Here, on earth, have been given more than once to mortal vision a faint foreshadowing of the glory with which the bodies of departed saints shall yet shine in Heaven. “When Aaron, and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him!” “And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him

(Stephen), saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Glory and beauty, such, at least, are two things that come out here. Glory, such as mortal eye cannot look upon undazzled ; beauty, such as it hath not entered the mind of man to conceive. Those who have looked upon the faces of the dead, especially of the young who have passed away, must have seen how, for the most part, death for a brief space seems to shed fresh beauty upon the empty tabernacle, how the harsh lines which pain had drawn are smoothed away, and it seems as if an Indian summer had come upon the body of our humiliation, before the winter of corruption sets in. And yet this beauty, I am convinced, is as nothing compared with the rich loveliness which the risen Christ shall yet shower upon the body of his loved bride, when the nuptial song of Heaven resounds through creation ; when "the King shall greatly desire her beauty," and the King's daughter shall be as glorious without as she is within ; "her clothing of wrought gold, her raiment of needlework ; when with gladness and with rejoicing they shall be brought, and shall enter into the King's palace."

It is not unnatural for one in the midst of all this to put the question, What guarantee has faith to fall back upon, that this great change ever can be effected ? It transcends so far the limits of possibility, judged by the human standard, that one may well be pardoned for entertaining a fear lest the

statement of Paul should yet take its place among the flights of a sanctified imagination, which will never be realised. I now produce the guarantee and pledge of the ultimate accomplishment of this glorious promise ; “ It is according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.” No power less vast could ever effect such a change as this will be ; to convert corruption into incorruption ; dishonour into glory ; the body of our humiliation into a body fashioned like unto His own glorious body. No creature can do this ; no one, save Him only who has power given to Him over all things. It seems to me a mightier exercise of power for Christ to cleanse and purify, and present blameless the souls of His people, than for Him to glorify the bodies of His saints ; and if He can do the one, unquestionably He can do the other ; if He has said He will do it, most assuredly He shall. He who is the pattern for our sanctified souls, He after whom our holy desires, and aspirations, and workings are to be fashioned, is the same after whom and by whom our frail, perishing, corrupting bodies shall be fashioned at the resurrection ; “ in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump we shall be changed, and this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption,” and the saying shall be brought to pass that was written so many centuries ago—“ Death is swallowed up in victory.”

When one thinks of motherhood laid low, of

youth, and strength, and professional work brought to a sudden close ; of girlhood, ripening into youth, untimely nipped by the frost of death ; of motherless children, of bereaved parents, and brothers, and sisters, within the more immediate sphere of home and kindred ; of relations and acquaintances, who also, though in less degree, have felt the barbs of affliction enter their soul, there is need for a minister trying something, at least, in the way of comfort, and of bringing forward the grounds of consolation, and of hope. I might have aimed at doing this, through speaking of the mighty and glorious change which death is to the soul ; how, freed from all taint of sin, and passing straight into the presence of God, and joining in the acclaim of praise, the soul has reached its home and haven, its rest and peace. This I might have done, but when one has, so to speak, been but very recently brought face to face with the calm, still, the mind, somehow, thinks even more upon the body which is visible, upon the body which rested for a day or two under the home-roof, and then was laid tenderly in "God's acre," than upon the soul. And I believe that even for, and in connection with, the body, there is reserved a wondrous glory, and I lay my hand upon these words of the tender-hearted Paul, "Who also shall change the body of our humiliation." I have as little doubt of the redemption of the body, as some men have of the redemption of the soul ; for Jesus, who is the Christ, will take care of it, and the words

of the prophet will have for us a loftier meaning than ever. "The breaker is come up before them ; they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it ; and their King shall pass before them, and their Lord on the head of them."

I have, in this volume of discourses, denied myself the pleasure of quoting from others who are my masters, not only in style, but also in treatment of the subject in hand. I cannot, however, refrain from adding the following sentences from the pen of the Rev. Dr A. W. Alexander, of America :—
"Faith looks forward to the transcendent glory, which, first enveloping in its cloud of light, Christ, the Head, shall next enfold and transfigure those who are Christ's at His coming ; when God, the Almighty Father, shall bring forth before the assembled universe, not the Master only, but all who have loved and followed Him, and the beams of that appearance shall be reflected from the central light on all the circle and retinue of attendant saints. Over the grave of those of God's people whom we have loved, a watchful angel seems to stand in silent waiting ; His mighty hand upon the seal of the sepulchre, to enlarge from all bonds, at the appointed moment, those who have died in the faith. This may compose our minds amidst the sudden agitation of bereavement ; stay the flood of our tears when those we most loved are carried out of our sight ; and kindle hope amidst the darkest sorrow. This may

encourage our belief that when genius, and talent, and learning, are removed from the church below, they shall reappear in fresh beauty, and enlarged capacities in the church above. If death is, after all, to the body but a sleep, and if there be an awakening out of this sleep, then we may with confidence commit their bodies to the grave. How precious to the grieved, smitten heart, is that doctrine of the resurrection which Paul spreads forth at length, in the end of his first Epistle to the Corinthians. There we learn that the bodies of believers are lost only in the sense in which seed is lost which we cast into the ground. It returns to dust, but the day is coming when it shall be raised and glorified. Blessed Gospel of Jesus, the Son of God! It has brought life and immortality to light. Infidelity has no such promises. As to the body, it gives that over to corruption, and death becomes an eternal sleep."

GRATIAE SOLIUM.

Not on a prayerless bed, not on a prayerless bed,
Compose thy weary frame to rest;
For they alone are blest
With balmy sleep
Whom angels keep;
Nor, though by care oppressed,
Or anxious sorrow,
Or though in many a coil perplexed
For coming morrow,
Lay not thy head
On prayerless bed. MARGARET MERCER.

EXODUS xxv. 22.—“And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and there I will meet with thee and commune with thee from above the mercy-seat.” HEBREWS iv. 16.—“Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

THE impression has, of late, gained ground that any purposes which the Old Testament may have been designed to serve, have been already served, and that, except as an interesting relic of antiquity, this part of the sacred canon has no value for the Christianity of the present age. There are some, however, who demur to this sweeping removal of the largest portion of the Bible from the sphere of human practicalities, and who behold in the Psalms of David, in the Proverbs of King Solomon, and of King Hezekiah, not less than in the magnificent

Prophecies of Isaiah, portions of Revelation which may be held as "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." But while they would retain these, they have no hesitation in discarding the books which set forth the ritual of the Mosaic economy. It seems to me that to do so is not only to deprive the Church of one important source of knowledge, and comfort, but also to withdraw one of the most wonderful illustrations of the educational processes whereby she has passed from light to light. It is not as if the New Testament dispensation were something standing entirely by itself, cut off from a grand historic past. This, the latest verbal revelation from God, casts its roots far back into the ages. It is in embryo in the primal promise; it sits with Abraham at the door of the tent on the plains of Mamre; it marches with Joshua into the land of earthly promise; it reigns with David and with Solomon. How strikingly all this is confirmed by the fact that men who were sent forth as witnesses for Jesus of Nazareth uniformly linked on the new to the old, and showed how the former is but a combination of fuller development of the latter. The Spirit's first work on Pentecost is, through Peter, to establish the connection between the two. "These men," say the mockers, "are full of new wine." "Not so," says the fisherman of Galilee, "not so;" this is what Joel, the prophet, long since declared would be, when he spoke about the Spirit being

poured out upon all flesh. What, I ask, is the structural argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews? Is it not that the old holds in it the new, as the bud holds in it the future flower and fruit? Is it not, as Paul declares, that these things were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come? Seal up the pages from Exodus to Deuteronomy, and you have sealed up what alone gives light as to the mighty purpose of God's grace; not only so, but you make the greater portion of the New Testament utterly unintelligible, and in its many references to the past, it is to you as one that speaks in an unknown tongue; and in the Lamb of God you have One of whom, for the first time, the world and the church have heard. Calvary loses more than half of its glory, and Pentecost loses its wonderful charm, as being the in-gathering of souls which had been spoken of centuries before in every harvest-home that gladdened the Hebrew heart. The old shadows forth the new; Jesus, and the wondrous privileges secured by His death, are the substances of which these old forms were but the shadow. It is the same Bible, and the same church from Genesis to Revelation,—the same church, but under a process of steady developement, becoming more and more distinct in its characteristics as the ages pass. While its circumstances are different, its life is ever the same, and its outward history is but a transcript of its spiritual struggles, even as the lines on the face bespeak the soul within.

Among the many methods employed by Jehovah for training the ancient church, and preparing it for the advent of the Substance, the TYPES of the Old Testament occupy a conspicuous place. The forthshadowings of good things to come, have in many cases met with scant justice at the hands of those who professed to assign to them their meaning. The extravagant, and fanciful interpretations which have been placed upon them, have, not unfrequently, turned away thoughtful and pious minds from the study of them. It is unquestioned, for instance, that we gain possession of the good land beyond the flood only through death, but it is absurd to say that the burial of Sarah in the cave of Macphelah was a type by which God meant to teach us that truth. To say that the 153,000 strangers whom Solomon employed to build the temple, were a type of the 153 Gentile nations into whose tongues the Bible has been translated, is not to interpret but to travestie an historical fact, and to make the so-called type utterly useless whenever the 154th Gentile nation shall have a Bible printed in its own language. The danger, however, of falling into mistakes such as these is very small when we turn our thoughts to the subject of this discourse. The MERCY-SEAT formed the golden lid of the ark of the covenant which was within the Holy of Holies of the Hebrew tabernacle. Like every other part of the tabernacle furniture, it was made as the Lord commanded His servant Moses. Whatever artistic

taste and ability the Jewish people had, was placed under the control and guidance of God. We can understand how necessary this was. The tabernacle was to be a *teacher* to men concerning God. No image must pollute that sacred place, which, of all so-called sacred places on earth, was the one that symbolised absolute purity with the possibility of forgiveness to the penitent. Neither philosophy nor metaphysics were to have any say here. All rested upon "Thus saith the Lord." The appreciation of the divine majesty shown by the Hebrew race in the erection of the Tabernacle was something extraordinary. Think of a nation of slaves contributing about £300,000 for a structure 15 feet by 45, and that the greater part of this wealth was lavished upon one small apartment—the Holy of Holies. Within that same enclosure stood the Ark of the Covenant, the golden lid of which was called by the name of the Mercy-seat. But the gold had dark spots on it; what were these? Spots of blood. From year's end to year's end the spots of blood were there, not tarnishing it, but giving it a glory such as nothing else on earth could have. On the tenth day of each September, Israel's High Priest passed within the veil that parted the Holy from the most Holy place, bearing with him the blood of the victims which had been offered in sacrifice for his own sins, and for the sins of the people. This he sprinkled upon the golden lid of the Ark, and upon the ground in front of the Mercy-seat. Not only

was the action of the High Priest typical, but that on which the blood was sprinkled became itself a type. Apart from the sprinkling of the blood, it was simply the golden lid of the Ark; when sprinkled with the blood, it became thenceforth the Mercy-seat on which, from between the cherubim, the Shekiniah shone. Can any one imagine that this was simply a ritual performance, which had no bearing upon any great truth in the Divine economy? If it were so, I cannot conceive of anything more absurd than this grave, venerable man, in white garments, going through the fantastic procedure of dipping his finger in blood, and sprinkling it upon the golden covering of a small chest which was covered with gold. I ask if it was worthy of God to enjoin that this should be gone through, unless there were some meaning behind it all? We know the meaning of it now. We stand not in open-eyed wonder before this antique ceremonial; we come in humble faith to God Himself, to God propitiated, reconciled by the great atoning sacrifice of His own Son, and we say, as we lay our hands upon His throne, "God be merciful to us, sinners." This shadow from the old times brings out a fact without which this world would be covered with darkness, and the hearts of men would be filled everywhere with a heavy grief. The fact is this, that there is a common ground on which God is willing to meet with man; the Creator to meet with the creature; the Infinite with the finite. It is the

most stupendous marvel in the whole realm of thought. Had men been free from sin, and altogether innocent, it had still been wonderful; but, how much more when it is borne in mind that we are poor and miserable, that our sins have gone over our heads, and that there is no cleanness in us. Is there any other plea than that of mercy which we can urge with the Holy God? Justice would debar us from His presence for ever and ever; it can only deal with us after our sins, and reward us according to our iniquities. Is it not to a guilty conscience, the most terrible of all thoughts, that God is a just God? Yes! and that come what may, happen what will, He must remain for ever and ever a just God. The lustre of His righteousness cannot be tarnished, and if there be only the seat of justice to which we can come, then our doom is sealed, and the penalty of ten thousand sins falls upon us. Blessed be God, His justice still remains as pure and bright as it ever was, and through the Mercy-seat we can at last plead with Him, as a just God, to extend to us forgiveness. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." As the ark of the covenant supported the golden lid, so the mercy of the great God our Saviour rests upon a perfect righteousness. Mercy does not supplant justice, but overshadows it. The testimony of God is still within the ark; the law, holy as God is holy, righteous as God is righteous,—the law, unbroken, unobliterated, is still there, but there is something more there; the blood,

namely, of the great sacrifice, of the atoning High Priest, who has bowed His head and said, "It is finished." In the whole world, there is no other spot where a sinner can find safety. Not in himself, so vile, so unholy ; not in the law of God, so glorious and so pure ; nowhere, save at the Mercy-seat. There God says, "I will meet thee ; I will commune with thee." Is not that "commune" a blessed word, a word full of comfort, and of a certain peaceful rest? Is not that "meeting with us" something to fill a human heart with joy? *God's* eye rests upon One with whom He is ever well pleased ; our eye rests upon the countenance of Him with whom we meet, and, lo ! the heart leaps out to Him, and the loosened tongue says, "Abba, Father, *our* Father which art in heaven," and the hand of faith clasps Him with a clasp which death itself cannot unloose.

I turn my thoughts now to *the value and the blessedness of the Mercy-seat*. The material Mercy-seat is no more ; the spiritual has taken its place ; the local Mercy-seat is gone, and instead of it we have a Mercy-seat equally accessible to all the earth. On the first Good Friday that ever was, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, and the awful mystery of the Holy of Holies lay naked to the eye of the passer-by. Most who knew of the fact, regarded it as a portent of coming disaster, and as the foreshadowing of heavy woe. For ages, that veil had stood between all Jewry and what lay behind it. But now, as if from the most

excellent glory, is heard the voice of One whose promises are yea and amen, declaring that Christ has offered atonement for human guilt, and that the way into the Holy of Holies, the way up to the Mercy-seat, is open to all. The golden Mercy-seat has had its day. These richly wrought curtains of blue, and purple, and scarlet, will intercept the view no longer. Christ has died, and the whole world is a Mercy-seat. Though no cherubim of glory outspread their wings before our eyes, the presence of Jehovah overshadows every humble and contrite heart, and the glory of the Eternal, brighter than the old Shekiniah, shines upon every seeking soul.

Suppose for a moment that there was *no* mercy-seat: no ground of communion at all with God! That we were cut off from all intercourse with, and from all possibility of approach to Him; that all hope of gaining His ear by our most passionate appeals was gone, would not our condition be terrible and sad? Those only who have come to the Mercy-seat to-day, and have had sweet fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, could tell what a blank it would make in the sum of those things which render earth joyous to them. Even the prayerless would experience a terrible dismay, if I went out and told them, in the name, and by the authority of God, that there was no longer a mercy-seat; if I asserted that prayer was henceforward and for ever denied to them, and that God would meet with

sinful men no more, and would no more commune with them. "I meant," says one, "to repent." "I meant," says another, "to have prayed to God to-morrow, and now what is this that I hear? There is no mercy-seat." Thank God, there is still a mercy-seat! If it were appalling to the prayerless, what would it be to the godly, if the Mercy-seat were removed, and for ever withdrawn? What a vacancy that would create! what a solitude! To us, a world without a Mercy-seat might as well be a world without God. For what could God be to us if we might never aspire to speak to Him? Even as it is, the world at times seems dark and desolate enough, and the cry of the yearning heart is oftentimes, "Oh that I had the wings of a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest; lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest." But what would the world be, if there were not any more a mercy-seat to cast the ray of a blessed hope athwart the darkness? Where could we come to for our sick and our dying? where for them that have wandered, and whose face is turned away from the God whom their father loved, and who was the portion of their mother's heart?

The Mercy-seat is the one refuge from the sting and anguish of guilt. If we repair not to it, then the unforgiven sin will prove our ruin. The one thing which, as sinners, we stand in need of, is MERCY, and, till that be extended to us, all enjoy-

ment is impossible. When of old the servant of the Lord presented the request, "I beseech thee, show me Thy glory," Jehovah passed before him, saying, "I am Jehovah, God, merciful and gracious." It is as if He, the Eternal, were content to waive all claims to glory derived either from creation or providence, and to rest these claims altogether upon the fact of His mercy. Was ever shout of adoring praise like that with which Micah concludes his prophecy? "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, that passeth by the remnant of the transgression of His heritage, and retaineth not His anger for ever, because He *delighteth* in mercy?" What a word that is for a poor trembling sinner to lay hold upon! What a word for him to derive consolation and confidence from—"delighteth." As if there were not any cry rising from earth to heaven unto the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth that drew so quickly His attention, or could bring him nearer to a man than this cry for "mercy." Sometimes the Great God, our Saviour, hears it in the dead stillness of the night, when the man has wrestled with himself, wrestled with his conscience, wrestled with his fears, and as the condemning wave of God's law, towering, and foam-crested, sweeps over him, the one word bursts from his soul, "Mercy! mercy!" God hears it; He who has promised to meet us, and to commune with us from above the Mercy-seat, hears it, and says, "thou hast found mercy, fear not; thy sins, which are many, are forgiven

thee." He hears it when it is the cry of One of His own children who has grievously offended, and who has wandered far from the paths of righteousness and of peace. We have all read one of these cries, perhaps not a few of us have uttered it, "Have mercy, O God, upon me, according to Thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." What, I wonder, would the king of Israel have done, on the day when his eyes were opened to perceive the heinousness of his sin, and the enormity of his guilt, had he not understood the figure of the true mercy which was within the Holy of Holies? How could the guilty stain of Uriah's blood have been wiped out? How could he ever again have looked upon the face of God, had it not been for the blood-besprinkled Mercy-seat? To every sinful soul this Mercy-seat is what the cities of refuge were to the manslayer. It secures his safety from the curse of the broken law. No sin-avenging hand can touch him there, for the arm of Christ defends him. The accuser can utter no threat which Jesus cannot silence. The law has no threatenings, and justice has no scourgings, which our Jesus has not borne for us. To all the fears engendered of conscious guilt, the challenge and the answer are one, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ that died."

It may be asked, when guilt is pardoned, and sin taken away, has the pardoned one not re-

ceived all that he *can* receive from the Mercy-seat? Most assuredly not. The words of Jehovah show that the Mercy-seat was the type and symbol to Israel, and, through them, to the whole Church of God, of His willingness to hear the supplications of His people, and to send them an answer in peace; "*I will meet with thee there, and will commune with thee.*" The Mercy-seat is thus the door of God's boundless treasury of spiritual gifts. Hither, for what he wants, the child of God comes, with the certainty that He who speaks with him, will withhold from him no good thing. Every good and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of Lights, and it comes down in answer to prayer. Many good things, it is true, are given to the prayerless, but it is as rain that falls upon the thankless sand, which is neither enriched nor made fruitful thereby. All gifts, to be true blessings, must pass to us by the Mercy-seat, which is the door of heaven's treasury. What a blessed place it is to which the thousands of God's people repair every day, and have their prayers answered in a larger sense than they themselves had ever thought of. One comes, saying, "Make Thy grace sufficient for me," and the answer from above the Mercy-seat is, "be it unto thee according to thy wish." Another, smitten and sorely wounded in the rough battle of life, comes saying, "Help, Lord, I am poor and needy," and the answer from above the Mercy-seat is, "fear thou not, for I am with thee, be thou not dismayed for I am

thy God ;" a third, for whom the road is rugged, and the skies very dark, comes with the words, "O send Thy light forth and Thy truth, let them be guides to me," and the answer from above the Mercy-seat is, "I will guide thee by My counsel, and afterwards I will receive thee to glory."

There is one thing about these approaches to the Mercy-seat which should not be forgotten ; that the marvellous experience of God's goodness to us in the past, engenders a holy boldness and confidence. Even though it be a seat where mercy pre-supposes, on the part of the suppliant, that he has no desert which he can plead, still the call of the Apostle is, "let us come boldly." We do not come as strangers and foreigners, but as fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. We have received, not the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." To Him we can come, informing Him of all that perplexes us, of all that distresses, of all that alarms us. He deems nothing too small for us to spread before Him ; we can tell at the Mercy-seat what we cannot speak of to the nearest and dearest on earth. We order our cause before Him ; we can fill our mouths with arguments ; we can put Him in remembrance ; we can plead with Him, we can even say, "Lord, we will not let Thee go, except Thou dost bless us." I have been frequently struck, in reading the Old Testament, with the bold key in which some of the prayers therein recorded, are pitched ; and I have been led to wonder

if it would, in these days of the New economy, be deemed a right thing to approach Him who has promised to meet us. Think, for instance, of the words, "O wherefore should the heathen say, where is their God now gone?" Think of the frequency with which God is entreated, nay, if one might say it without irreverence, *commanded* to "arise;" or of these words, "O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man *that* turneth aside to tarry for a night? Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man *that* cannot save?" Think of that last sentence—"As a mighty man that cannot save!" What a power, what a force of impetuous battling, of wrestling, that is earnest in every throe, and upheaving of the arms that meet round the arm of God above the Mercy-seat! What gives that holy boldness, that spirit that will take no denial, and which will give God no rest? It is the consciousness that the God with whom we plead is looking down upon the blood, sprinkled by Jesus upon the lid of the ark, and that, for His name's sake, He will do to us, and for us, far more exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think; and, with the consciousness that God is looking upon it, there is the consciousness that we, too, are looking upon it, and with every look at the sprinkled blood we derive fresh courage, and feel our hold grow stronger, till, from above the Mercy-seat is heard the voice of the shining ones welcoming their younger brothers.

CUM CHRISTO REGNABUNT.

“ In Judah’s land God is well known,
His name’s in Israel great :
In Salem is His tabernacle,
In Zion is His seat.

There arrows of the bow He brake,
The shield, the sword, the war,
More glorious thou than hills of prey,
More excellent art far.”

Scottish Version (Metrical) of the Psalms.

HEBREWS xi. 39—“ They wandered in deserts, and in mountains,
and in dens and caves of the earth.”

THE Psalm which stands at the head of this discourse, is one which has a history for Scottish men and women. One Sabbath morning in June 1679—the first day of the month, as well as the first day of the week—250 men, for the most part insufficiently provided with arms, advanced with firm step to meet Claverhouse and his dragoons, whose aim it was, not only to interrupt the worship of God, but to take prisoner as many as possible of the

worshippers. As the persecuted Covenanters advanced, they sung, to the tune of "Martyrs," the words:—

"In Judah's land God is well known,
His name's in Israel great,
In Salem is His tabernacle,
In Zion is His seat."

It was a trial of strength between free men fighting for all that they held dear, and the fierce soldiers of a cruel tyrant; a trial of strength in which, for once, right prevailed over might, and the oppressors were glad to escape from the hands of those whom they had hoped to make their prey. The gleam of success was not long in disappearing, and Drumclog, with its gallant feat of arms, was succeeded by Bothwell Brig with its disaster, and utter rout, and that again by a furnace of persecution heated seven times hotter than before. It is with a feeling of pain that one discovers the source of the reverse which befell the Covenanters, three weeks after they had done so valiantly and well at Drumclog. Their success had drawn to their standard 5000 men, and although the royal forces, led by Monmouth, outnumbered them by three to one, yet, such was the advantageous nature of the position which they held, that had they only remained united, and driven away the demon of discord, divided sentiment, it is more than probable that they would have maintained their ground.

Ten years previously, what was termed an "in-

dulgence," had been issued by Charles II., and not a few of the Presbyterian ministers had availed themselves of its provisions. A considerable section, however, had sternly refused all compromise, and continued to frequent the conventicle at every risk and hazard. When the success at Drumclog drew to the Standard hundreds of Presbyterians, it was found that a goodly number of them were implicated in the acceptance of this indulgence. Already had the indulgence wrought great mischief through the disunion of which it had been the cause, but it was destined at Bothwell Brig to work greater mischief still. It was keenly debated, whether those who had accepted the indulgence should be permitted to join in arms with their brethren till they had first condemned it, and had acknowledged that they were wrong in so accepting it. Precious hours and days were lost; hours, that should have been devoted to the training of the numerous recruits, and days that should have been spent in procuring ammunition, were given up to recrimination and discussion. Neither the presence of the enemy on the opposite bank of the Clyde, nor the fact that three hundred gallant soldiers were, for hours, defending the bridge which formed the key to the position, could stop the miserable quarrel. In the rout which ensued, upwards of 400 perished, and 1200 who had surrendered on the field of battle, were driven to Edinburgh, where they were penned, like cattle, in Greyfriars Churchyard. Of all places in

Scotland there was none which held in it the same bitter irony for these poor prisoners. It was here that, forty years before, the covenant had been signed, amid the surgings of a great joy, and the hope that freedom was for ever secured thereby to the nation and to the Church. The forty years pass, and hundreds of Scotland's bravest sons were exposed, in Old Greyfriars Churchyard, to the pitiless storms of rain and snow, sleeping on the bare ground, under the cold grey sky, of what is to-day the Queen of all earthly cities. At the end of five months the 1200 were reduced to 250.

The period between the defeat of Bothwell Brig and the death of Charles II., has received the name of the "Killing Time,"—a time during which Scotland resembled more a shambles than ought else. Although, for a brief space after the accession of James II., the fierceness of the storm was, to some extent, allayed, it was only the lull which precedes the outbreak of the tempest. James II. was openly, what his brother Charles II. had been secretly, a Romanist, and his anxious desire was to overturn completely the Protestant institutions of the country over which he reigned, and to make Scotland, once more, the vassal of Rome. To one who was less of a bigot than James, it might have been evident, that a project such as this could not succeed. Scotland had tasted the sweets of liberty; the crushed and oppressed state of the country under the sway of

the Roman hierarchy, was known and remembered ; and although the Covenanters had fallen in large numbers during the persecution under Charles II., still a faithful remnant was left to testify for the truth, and to uphold the banner for liberty of conscience, and for freedom, civil and ecclesiastical. More than one Indulgence was issued by the King, not with the view of rendering more tolerable the position of the Nonconformists of England, or of the Presbyterians of Scotland, but to render more easy for his co-religionists access to places of power and of trust, from which they had been for many years debarred. The Covenanters, perceiving the drift and object of these Indulgences, very properly refused to avail themselves of the terms on which they were presented, and so continued to be the objects of a relentless persecution. The measures of severity adopted against them were intensified by the famous proclamation made by the Covenanters in Sanquhar, some five years before the death of Charles II.

On the anniversary of the battle of Bothwell Brig, a little troop of horsemen rode up to the Cross of Sanquhar, and, one of them dismounting, read as follows :—" We do by these presents, disown Charles Stuart that has been reigning, or rather tyrannising on the throne of Britain these years bygone, as having any right, title, or interest in the crown of Scotland, for government, as forfeited several years since by his perjury, and breach of covenant both to God and his kirk, and by his tyranny, and breach of

the essential conditions of reigning in matters civil. We do declare war with such a tyrant, and usurper."

It was but one short month after this "declaration," when one of those who had aided in the framing of it, fell fighting valiantly at Airsmoss, gaining from the Lord whom He served the fulfilment of the promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." It mattered not to Richard Cameron that the persecutors branded him as a rebel, so long as he himself felt that he was acting truthfully and loyally to his God. What though they bore the head and hands of the noble soldier of the cross to Edinburgh, and fixed them on high, to be gazed upon by all that passed? That was nothing to the man whose prayer was answered, "Lord spare the green, and take the ripe." And *he* was ripe if ever man was—ripe to pass on to the inheritance of the saints in glory. Ere the ghastly trophies of the battlefield were thus publicly exhibited, they were taken to his father, at that time a prisoner for the truth, and he was asked "if he knew them." The tears flowed fast at the sight, fell upon the hands, fell upon the face, of his dead son. "Yes," he said, "I know them, I know them—they are my son's, my own dear son's; it is the Lord, good is the will of the Lord." I do not wonder, that among the portions of Holy Writ carved upon the martyrs' stone in Greyfriars Churchyard, is this one, "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O

Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?" For it must have seemed long to the true hearts that were, from month to month, and from year to year, marked out as the prey of the enemy. Eight-and-twenty long years! nearly the lifetime of a whole generation, and the wrath, and fury of the enemy becoming ever more hot and fierce! Well nigh 18,000 of Scotland's bravest and best, murdered and destroyed, banished and imprisoned! What wonder is it, that the hearts of men began to fail them for fear, and that the words of Renwick were but the utterance of a longing that the end might speedily come? "Death to me," said he, "is but as rest to the weary." Only six-and-twenty, the battle of life, in ordinary circumstances, all to begin, and yet, as if four score years had passed over him, crying for rest—the rest that remaineth to the people of God. After almost two centuries have passed, the name of the youthful martyr (the last of the martyrs of the Covenant), is fragrant in the memory of the Scottish people.

It were easy, from the records of these sad years, to extract instances of high-handed oppression, such as make the blood run cold, or to narrate tales of heroism, before which all Greek and Roman fame fades away; but it seems to me better that I should address myself to the consideration of the principles for which they contended, rather than of the valiant deeds which they performed.

There was, first of all, *deep love for Him whose Kingly rights were invaded, and an earnest faith in the great atonement which He has wrought out by His shed blood.* In the great conflict on which Pagan Rome entered with the Christianity of the first two centuries, the latter, according to the Apocalyptic vision, overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. As it was with the Early Christians, so was it with the Scottish Covenanters, they, too, overcame by the blood of the Lamb. No such victories have ever been gained on earth as have been gained by the blood of the Lamb. This blood was His own grand means of victory over sin, and Satan, and Death; and His followers, in every age, have found it equally powerful to secure for them the victory over the triple foe. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” The faith of those noble men who fought Scotland’s great battle, rested on this firm foundation, that the Jesus who laid down His life on Calvary was, and is, the very God, and their God. Before entering on the contest, they had, by much solemn searching of heart, and through much communion with God, gained a firm resting place for the soul’s affection, and for the soul’s hope in the finished work of Him who died for them. And with the assurance that all is well there, that sin is pardoned, that guilt is removed, that brotherhood with Christ, and sonship with God are secured, what

care or trouble of earth can annoy? Thrice is he armed who has his hope resting upon the blood of the Lamb; nay, more, he has victory assured to him: he shall overcome. With that precious blood to fall back upon, with their faith and hope resting upon that sure foundation, no evil could befall them, and sudden death was only another name for sudden glory. All the suffering which they endured was but the filling up of the suffering of Jesus, and, therefore, "they loved not their lives unto the death." This identifying of themselves with Christ was one of the most wonderful things in the whole struggle. It was not the aged only, but the young among them, who understood the oneness existing between Jesus and His people, and who were enabled thereby to fight the good fight of faith, and to prove more than conqueror, through Him that loved them. When the persecutors put to a young girl of eighteen, bound to a stake, within tide-mark, the mocking question, What she thought of her fellow-martyr in her dying agonies? her answer was, "What do I see but Christ in one of His members, wrestling there? Think you that *we* are the sufferers? No! it is Christ in us; for He sends none, a warfare on their own charges." Followers of Jesus to the glory of heaven, followers of Jesus to the crown of life, they knew that these could be theirs only by, and after bearing the cross. On lonely moor, in rugged cave, in dark prison-hold, one radiant, glorious form was ever before their eyes

—“the Lamb as it had been slain.” They did not think life a price too heavy to pay for a glimpse of Him who is fairer than the sons of men ; or for an antepast of an eternity to be spent with Christ. Listen to the words of one of them in the struggle with the last enemy,—“I shall see Christ as He is, I shall see Him reign, and all His fair company. Mine eyes shall see my Redeemer. Let my Lord’s name be exalted, and, if He will, let my name be grinded to pieces, that He may be all in all. If He should slay me ten thousand times, yet will I trust in Him ; I have gotten the victory, and Christ is holding out both His arms to embrace me.”

I set highest in my thoughts of these “Great-hearts” of the Christian Church, the personal relation which they held to the Lord of Life. The feeling with them evidently was, that if the Lamb of God had laid down His life for them, there was nothing too hard for them to endure, nothing too great for them to do on behalf of Him who had done all for them. It is everything to understand the foundation-principle upon which all their heroic toil and endurance rested ; to know and to feel assured that, set over against the Stewarts, the Lauderdale, the Claverhouses, the men who loved not their lives unto the death, were men aiming by means of a holy life, to rise into the full stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. It may seem to some, that to mention in the same breath Charles II. and John Brown

of Priesthill, is to do an uncourteous thing. To me it seems that the contempt of every right thinking man must rest upon the king, who, sunk in lust and hypocrisy, covered his thirst for blood with the semblance of a smile. As for the other, though his descent stands not in the book of the Lyon King at Arms, he *is* a king, a hero, a true man, and not a liar, overcoming by the blood of the Lamb.

I find in the Scottish Covenanters the feature which characterised the Reformation from first to last, namely, *intense reverence for the Word of God*. The law of the Eternal was to them of more value than the law of man. If the latter came into conflict with the former, as in too many cases it did in these days, then it was not an open question which of the two should be obeyed. Come out of it what might, —persecution, suffering, death itself—the divine law *must* hold the first place. Hence it came, that when others around them listened to cunningly-devised fables of mere human authority, they, like men standing upon some strong rock, were able to hold their own, and to overcome. While others were drawing the rule of surplice, of liturgies, and of the sign of the Cross from the traditions of Romanism, the persecuted were drinking of the water of life pure as crystal. In the eye of their persecutors, it was the head and front of their offending, that they made the Word of God the supreme judge in all matters of controversy. Here are their words: “The supreme judge by which all

decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be none other than the Holy Spirit speaking in scripture." In faith, in worship, in discipline, in doctrine the grand test was, "What saith the scripture?" It is easy for the novelist of our day to scoff at them as prim Presbyterians, measured according to the measuring reed of the Temple, but they would never have overcome if they had not had that Word of God to fall back upon. It sprang from this source that their writings and their language were impregnated with the language of scripture. They, however, mistake much the main use to which the Word of the living God was placed among them, who imagine that it was simply a book from which might be furnished texts for logomachies on disputed ecclesiastical points. It was, above all things, "their comfort in their affliction." It was bread to their hungry souls; it was a spring of water in the wilderness. Its exceeding great and precious promises held them up in the evil hour. "Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." This precious Word of God went with them to the battlefield, to the dungeon, to the scaffold; and, most frequently, the last

sentence they uttered as they passed through death into the palace of the great King, was, as in the case of Renwick, taken from the sacred page, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth."

They not only rested upon the work of Jesus for their personal salvation, but *they guarded with jealous care the kingly rights which pertained to Him as the only Head of the Church.* There is no expression which is to be found more frequently in their writings than this, "THE CROWN RIGHTS OF MESSIAH THE PRINCE." To some, this seems to be a sort of impalpable thing. But whatever it may be in our day, and amidst the strife of rival factions, it was, to the men of the covenant, something intensely real. Even grant that they were mistaken, and that the "crown-rights of Jesus" is a mere idea, and nothing more, it cannot be denied that to *them* it was a reality. Can we imagine men, outlawed, hunted like partridges upon the mountains, standing hourly in peril of death, sealing their testimony with their blood, and all for something which was of the most shadowy kind? But not only were these "crown-rights of Christ" real in the eyes of the Covenanters, they are real all the world over. One might as well ask if there be any Christ at all. For if there be at the right hand of God, Jesus of Nazareth, then is this Jesus of Nazareth Head over all things to the Church, which is His body. Close study of the literature of

the period has convinced me that the main question at issue between the reactionaries, as represented by the Stuarts and their court, on the one side, and by the Reformers on the other, was simply the sovereignty of Jesus, and His right as King and Head of the church to prescribe her doctrine, worship, and discipline. This lay at the very core of the contest, and, at one time, it seemed as if the glorious truth were to be altogether extinguished. It would have been so, but for the faithful few who, undismayed by the frown of king and courtier, and strong in their love for Him who had loved them, stood, in the evil day, as a bulwark which no power of man could overthrow. The craft of one king, and the cruel despotism of his three successors, in vain attempted to erect upon the ruins of the persecuted Presbyterian Church, a system which made an earthly monarch supreme in matters pertaining to the house of God. To all such attempts the men of the covenant had but one reply, "Whether it be right, in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."

The point on which the position of the covenanters has been most severely judged is that which bears upon their so-called disloyalty. "Were they not rebels? Was it not their aim to overturn the government, and to get rid of the dynasty which had in its various members proved itself so hostile to the cause which they had espoused?" In reply to these questions, I demand that we reflect upon the

position and circumstances in which these men were placed. They were hunted prey from mountain to moss, from cavern to cliff. No retreat was sufficiently wild, or secret, to secure them from the keen eye of the prowling informer, and the relentless pursuit of their vindictive enemies. Was it strange that they stood at bay? That they turned upon their persecutors, warning them first that there was a boundary line, the crossing of which might make the great law of self-preservation the paramount law of their action. "Let not any think," they say, "that (our God assisting us) we will be so slack-handed in time coming to put matters in execution, as heretofore we have been, seeing we are bound faithfully and valiantly to maintain the cause of Christ. . . . The sinless necessity of self-preservation accompanied with holy zeal for Christ reigning in our land, and suppressing of profanity will move us not to let you pass unpunished. Call to your remembrance, *all that is in peril is not lost, and all that is delayed is not forgiven.*" There are two expressions in this brief extract which I have taken from the "Admonitory Vindication against intelligencers and informers," which cannot fail to present in a striking light the attitude of these valiant men. These are, "the sinless necessity of self-preservation," and, "all that is in peril is not lost." What a noble faith in God comes out in that last expression! Everything in peril! life in peril! truth in peril! the dear fatherland in peril! the Church of Christ in peril! BUT NOT LOST.

If vindication be desired for the attitude taken up by the Covenanters in reference to the Stuart dynasty, it is to be found, I conceive, in the memorable Revolution of 1688, when the man who had shed the blood of God's dear saints was declared to have forfeited the crown, and the throne became vacant. In the Convention of Estates, assembled in Edinburgh for the purpose of ratifying the Revolution, the formal deed by which this was accomplished might almost be taken for one of those so-called rebellious and disloyal proclamations, which were issued from time to time by those who bore in the wilderness the banner which had inscribed upon it, "For Christ, His Crown and Covenant." "Whereas King James VII., being a professed Papist, did in a public proclamation assert an absolute power to annul and disable all the laws, particularly the laws establishing the Protestant religion, and to the violation of the laws and liberties of the kingdom, *therefore* the Estates of the Kingdom of Scotland find and declare that he hath forfeited the right to the crown, and the throne is become vacant."

Here is, then, the national homologation of the grand contest in which the Covenanters had been engaged, a contest which lies at the foundation of the constitutional liberty now enjoyed by us, and which has rendered itself remarkable throughout all ages, not only for the importance of the issues involved, but for the success with which,

in the end, it was crowned. The stones which the affection of friends had placed above the remains of them that were shot down like beasts of prey, have experienced, in many cases, the decay inseparable from passing years; but the grand principles for which they suffered shall never perish. The grey moss may fill the letters which the hand of love has rudely, but touchingly carved, still, in the Book of God's remembrance these same letters glow in the transcendent brightness of His own throne. Not only so, but they themselves, who fought the good fight, shine now as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever.

AY DE MI! AY DE MI!

“It is told me I must die :

O what happiness !

I am going

To the place of my rest ;

To the land of the living ;

To the haven of security ;

To the kingdom of peace ;

To the palace of my God ;

To the nuptials of the Lamb ;

To sit at the table of my King ;

To feed on the bread of angels ;

To see what no eye hath seen ;

To hear what no ear hath heard ;

To enjoy what the heart of man

Cannot comprehend.

R. LANGHORN.

MARK v. 34.—“Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the
Master (teacher) any further?”

It was a very dark cloud which had fallen upon the house of the ruler of the synagogue. His position in society renders it probable, that nothing which either money or skill, or tender nursing could do for his daughter's recovery, had been wanting. As the weary days, and more weary nights had passed, hope had fought hard with fear; and the father, standing on the shore, had marked how the tide, for

a time, ebbcd and flowcd. One day he saw, with an anxious heart, that the wave which had gone back a good way on the beach, did not come up, with its quick lapping motion, to the former line—did not, indeed, so come up any more, and he said, “henceforth, I fear, it is to be all ebb, and no flow.” And so it was. Disease said, “I will be master,” and the fever-heat scorched his fair flower, and all soothing gales from south, or from west, failed to make the quickly-drawn breath less hot, or the parched skin more moist. The pale, cold lips gave their last kiss, and whispered their last farewell; and the eye, as it closed, shot forth one flash of the old love; then the hand of death gently drew the curtain of a long sleep over it; and the father was not there to mix the warm life of his own lips with the cold of hers, or to take into his heart, as a treasure for all his time on earth, the look that said, “ABBA,” “O my father.” He was not there: he had gone for a physician,—for one that, possibly, he would not have thought of coming to, but that the hand of the God of Israel lay very heavily upon him. When it comes to this of it in a household, one is not apt to ask for a sight of the physician’s diploma. The course which Jairus took is what the Faculty would call “*very irregular*;” but, when the question at issue is the possible recovery of a dear child, one takes the risk of irregularity, in the hope that, after all, there *may* be channels of healing other than those known to the profession, and the

instinct of a strong faith, no less than the yearning of his heart over his beloved daughter, happens to lead him to the GREAT Healer. There he is, then, with a great crowd surging round him, and increasing at every step. Falling at His feet, the cry of the father's anguish proves to be also the cry of a great faith, "My little daughter lieth at the point of death; I pray thee come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed, and she shall live." The Christ who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me," goes himself to this "little daughter," who cannot, for her sore sickness, come to Him; and as He goes, death, for once, is found to have outstripped the Lord of life, and the father's heart murmurs, "for me, to-day, there is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there."

Such is the brief narrative which precedes the words of the text, "Why troublest thou the Master any further;" and my object in selecting this saying of the messengers that met Jairus, is to show, that the popular impression that Christ has nothing further to say to us, and we nothing further to say to Him, after such a trial as that recorded by the evangelist, is utterly mistaken and wrong.

There is a tendency, in the presence of death, to imagine that Christ's care and love for us are things of the past. I can partly understand how this should be, and I am not prepared to say that Christ Himself does not make allowance for it. At all events, He understands it fully; better, even, than

we ourselves do. He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust. Death is such a change; there is nothing like it within the observation of man, whether in respect to the sharpness of the dividing line, or the totality which it presents. The flame of life may have burned itself down to a spark; but, still, that solitary spark is "LIFE," and not death. The heart clings with an apprehension, well-nigh frenzied, to this one solitary point of light. The eye is fixed upon it alone, and marks out how the very thing that makes the spark so clear is *the gathering darkness*. By-and-by the solitary point of light is gone, and everything is dark. One understands now, as never before, that the SHADOW of death, and DEATH itself are two different things; and in token of it, there are whisperings that "the end has come," and that "all is over and past." "Why trouble the Master any further?" Time was, when, if He had meant to answer the cry of the heart that beat wildly between hope and fear, He would have done so; but now, the irrevocable has taken place, A feeling of hardness gains upon our nature. The mood becomes dark, like the circumstances which surround it. Nor man, nor woman, nor any created thing pleases it, and if the heart were to fashion into words the brooding thought, it would say, "I trouble the Master no further." A few summers ago, I saw the very drama enacted on the wide expanse of a Northern firth. A day, fair as summer's day can be, was succeeded by lowering skies,

and gusts of wind. Under the influence of the latter, the sea rose into fury, and the waters were lashed into foam. As the breakers dashed against the beetling crags, the white foam flew inland, not more white than the wings of the sea-birds, that rushed to land before the might of the fierce wind Euroclydon. One solitary sail, out in the offing, arrested my attention. Tacking now to this point, now to that, but seemingly driven back after each fresh effort, it seemed as if the mighty arms of the tempest had closed in upon it, bearing death to the hardy fishermen on board. I saw in the rushing hither and thither, in the effort to force a way through the storm, the tragedy of human hearts enveloped in a dark surrounding of anguish. I heard the sighing and the moaning of storm-tossed souls beginning to doubt "if God knew, and if there were knowledge in the Most High." So comes the murmuring against Him who has not come to our help in the exact way which we ourselves had prescribed. It was working in that loving heart in Bethany, which had cried and longed for the presence of the Great Teacher. It found expression in the words, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." He does not meet chiding with chiding; He remembers the frailty of human hearts, and, with a grave, sweet earnestness, he says, "I am the Resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live—believest thou this?" The

care and love of Christ for his brethren should not be things of the past to the bereaved heart. Rather will I hold, though all that sense should say may be against it, that never does the Master more truly sympathise with us, or more really love us, than when the shadow of death lies upon the home where, as in Bethany, there were hearts that leapt with joy as the message was brought to them in the fields, "the Master is come, and calleth for thee." The day will come, when, mingling with the confession of our many sins, this sentence will find a place, "pardon me, O my Lord, in that when my husband, or my wife, or my daughter, or my son passed away, I was so foolish and so ignorant, as to question Thy love and Thy tender care.

Christ's great trouble is that we, His brothers and sisters, thank Him so little. The great, loving heart of Jesus would fain have it, that those whom He has loved with an everlasting love, should never be long away from Him. He knows that the world, and its cares, have claims upon His people: He is wishful that they should understand that His claims, and the claims of daily business do not necessarily clash, but that the two may be made to harmonise. All the same, He welcomes the coming of the hour when, all the claims of labour and work being satisfied, we feel ourselves ready to sit down with Him, to lay our head upon His bosom, and to speak to Him as a brother. When one is in the proper mood for it, earth, for a brief space, is transmuted

into heaven. Then, come gushing forth under the spell of His wondrous love, the trials and the sorrows of the day. How this one, whom we had esteemed as a brother, slighted us, and sneered, and dropped a seed of evil into some other heart in regard to us. "Hush!" He says, "have you never read how, sitting on a mountain in Palestine, I said one day, 'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake?'" We tell Him (and as we do so, apologise for troubling *Him* with such things) how it has been a poor day for us in business; how, some one that had promised a payment which was to have gone so far to keep things moving, had disappointed us utterly, and we are so straitened, that it has almost come to a deadlock. "Do not fear," He says, "the silver and the gold are mine; seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." And, some night you come to Him and say, "Master, my daughter is dead. I mentioned her to you months ago; every day, every night, every hour, I mentioned her to you, and I said one day, Master, you are coming into your garden soon to gather lilies, will you please not to gather this one? I wish to have it with me a little while yet. You listened, hundreds of years ago, to the cry of a man who said, "this city is near to flee unto, and IT IS A LITTLE ONE," and I, too, said, "it is a little one, she is so

young, and life is just opening for her, and she may do some good work for you here, but—ah, me ! my daughter is dead ; pardon me, I will trouble thee, O my Master, no further.” THEN gathers on the face of the Lord a look of deep concern ; of pity, not of anger ; of gentle love, and not of wrath. He says, “ You did not trouble me at all ; I was there all the time ; I was standing by your daughter, I folded her every night in my arms, with a love deeper than her mother’s when she kissed her, and said good-night and happed her up. It is hard upon you, but I mean you to feel that it *is* hard, and—come closer to me—what thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter.” Do you not see that the one thing which troubles Him is, that you should imagine He has been troubled by your prayers and your cry. To the heart of Jesus, the Hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim, of angel and of archangel, are but small things compared with the cry from some poor child of sorrow, bearing His cross, and causing to ascend into His ear the words, “ Master, carest Thou not that I perish ? ” All the brotherly instinct of a heart that was itself pierced with grief, rushes forth. “ It must not be,” He says, “ that this saddened soul shall think that he troubles Me. I see him keeping back. I will do with him as I did with Jairus when he came to tell Me about his daughter, I will come to his house, I will say, ‘ be not afraid, only believe.’ ” Make way for Him, you, with tear-filled eyes ; you with the storm of unbelief sweeping in

wild gusts through your heart, make way for the Master, and listen to Him as He says, "Why make you this ado, and weep, the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth."

We forget that bereavement is only a part of our spiritual education, and that the most valuable part of our education comes after, and does not precede the departure of those whom we love. The "Teacher," (not the "Master.") It will be long, I daresay, before the ear becomes accustomed to the former word, and yet it is certainly right for us to understand, that in almost *every* case where Christ was addressed on earth as "Master," the word never conveyed the idea of power, or command, but of "teaching." Christ has many ways of exercising the teaching power which belongs to Him, as the prophet greater than Moses. These I do not need to specify, as we are concerned with this question of bereavement only. Preceding the departure of those whom we have loved and tended, there is, especially in the presence of protracted affliction, many a valuable lesson to be learned. The mere fact that we are, of necessity, more withdrawn from the world; that the quiet of the sickroom is favourable for reflection; that there is being enacted under our eyes the conflict of disease with health, of death with life; that we are looking upon a soul that is either being ripened for glory, and for the crown, or that is sinking deeper and deeper into the darkness and gloom of estrangement from God. I do not, in

truth, envy the man, or woman, who comes out of such a school without any advancement in the knowledge of the deep things of God. I think such an one has good cause to say, "so brutish am I, I am as a beast before thee." But, let it be remembered, that this, after all, is but a part of the great economy of education whereby Christ, the Master, is striving to make us more meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and more useful to our fellow-men. *The* most valuable part always comes *after* heavy trial. We require, for instance, to learn how to do without those who, as a heathen poet termed it, were "the one-half of our life;" we have to learn, more and more, the impossibility of doing without Christ; the sweet hymn has to be got, as we say in Scotland, BY HEART:—

"I need Thee every hour, most gracious Lord;

No tender voice but Thine

Can help afford.

I need Thee every hour,

In joy or pain,

Come quickly and abide,

Or life is vain.

I need Thee, oh, I need Thee;

Every hour I need Thee.

O bless me now my Saviour,

I come to Thee."

I have never been able to contemplate, save with a deep-rooted aversion, the idea of finality in a man's education, here or hereafter. One half of the happi-

ness of life to me consists in learning—in adding, from day to day, to the knowledge already acquired. Suppose, then, that, with bereavement, all further advance were to be arrested, what a stunted growth, what a dwarfing and narrowing of the stature of the man in Christ Jesus would indubitably take place! How could the stature of a “perfect” man in Christ Jesus ever be reached? The phrase so often heard in prayer,—“a sanctified use of affliction,” has in it, if it be only rightly understood, a fulness and richness of meaning which few other phrases have. It means, that a man shall not be afraid to trouble Jesus with the prayer, that He would continue still to teach him; that He, with whom are all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, would lead us out, and on to the light of the perfect day, where sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and all tears shall be wiped away by the hands that had in them, and which may still have in them, the print of the nails.

It may appear trite to say that He, the Master, *desires to quicken in our heart a perception of the necessity for being ourselves prepared to encounter death*; and yet, that which is the first and simplest lesson is, I fear, the one that is hardest to learn. The general impression produced upon human hearts by the existence of death in the world, is of so vague a kind, that nothing is more necessary than that we should, at some time or other, be brought into a closer connection with it, than by reading in public

announcements that some one has passed away. If our education were to be advanced by the many memorials of death which are to be witnessed around us, certainly there is no lack of opportunity and occasion for putting to ourselves the question, "When death comes what will that be for us?" Glory or shame; light or darkness; the entrance to a palace, or the entrance to a prison? But all this does not secure the desired end. It must come closer to us; it must, so to speak, rub clothes with us, and take our hand, and lay it on the cold brow of its victim, and say, "this, too, will shortly happen to yourself." It will certainly happen. For there is this in death that is not in any other trial incident to humanity. To be hurled from affluence to poverty is a sad thing, but, when we hear of it, we entertain the belief, or the hope that we ourselves may escape this sudden change in our worldly estate. An acquaintance of ours has met, I shall suppose, with a severe accident, whereby life or limb is imperilled, and we can still say *we* may escape from the danger; *but* with death it is so different. "God hath appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment." To die were not in itself so great a matter after all. I can conceive of circumstances in which it might even seem desirable—circumstances, in which it is far more brave to live than to die; but the "*after this*"—*that* is what makes death of such supreme consequence in human lives, and which presses upon us the most solemn of all questions,

"Are we prepared to die?" The wisest men are not they who put that question far from them ; or who defer it till it forces itself by approaching dissolution upon the conscience, and the heart. Ask it now, ask it in the presence of the dying and dead. So does the Great Teacher will it, when He places us in the school of bereavement.

The Master desires that the present world may have less hold upon us, and that the world to come should bulk more largely in our thoughts. Our relations to the world, and our relation to, and work for Jesus are not necessarily discrepant forces in human life ; Christ, at least, has not meant them to be so. But, while that is the ideal, how few there are that reach it ! Is it not rather with us after this fashion ? The world eats its way into the heart, and gradually dethrones Christ. I do not mean by the "world," merely the sordid love of gain, but everything outside of ourselves, which may be set up as a rival to Jesus. Undue affection for friends, undue love of pleasures, of amusements, of literature, of art ; everything, in short, that enters into competition with Christ, and strives to withdraw the allegiance of the soul from Him, comes under this comprehensive term. Out of many methods possible to Jesus for withdrawing our hearts from the "world," none is so frequently employed as bereavement. Other methods, for the most part, fail. *This* suddenly and at once, calls a halt in the career of our infatuation, and *makes* us think. Plans

which we have been forming irrespectively of any recognition of God are levelled with the dust, and our castles, our palaces, our mansions, are but masses of hideous ruin. Faces that we gazed upon with a doting fondness, are changed from the hue and flush of health, into the paleness and the coldness of death. There are some who think and speak of all this, as simply among the chances of a mutable life, and the nature which was hard before, becomes harder still, and after a time the old carnival of sin commences, and the benediction of the 94th Psalm has no meaning for such, "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law; that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity." But there are others, thank God, who are sitting at the feet of the Great Teacher, and who, when the idol is broken, do but kiss more fervently the hand that broke it; and, as they stoop in sore pain over His hand, they say, "Even so, Jesus, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight." And as for them that have entered into the kingdom, they say, "All that our God made us to suffer, we now know to be for our good." The golden crown is heavier for them to-day, in that the crown which, as kings to God, they wore on earth, had many thorns in it. They wished to be true and noble, and at any cheaper price than this, it could not be. Not a pang they suffered, which did not wean them more thoroughly from the world; not a disappointment they felt, which did not lead them to

trust more entirely in Jesus. They thank Him more deeply than ever for the flame that purged away the dross ; for the furnace-heat which tried the silver ; for the conflagration, which scorched into ashes the hay, and the wood, and the stubble, while it only made the precious stones gleam more brightly. What they prayed to God for was a noble heart, which no earth-born affection could drag down from its lofty aim of a Christ-like life, and He gave them that, not only in, but *by* their sufferings. In this connection a modern poetess has made a beautiful use of the old Greek legend as to how the first flute was made. There grew by the river bank a feeble reed, which a great, masterful hand tore up ; the pith was drawn from its heart, and the poor empty thing was cut and notched. *Then* came from it, notes such as caused gods and men to listen, and to wish that the sweet music should never cease, but go on for ever and ever. Under the shadow of the old legend lies a grand and cheering truth. No music of noble words, or of high example, ever sounds forth from us till the loving hand of God tears us from the world's muddy resting-places, and gashes our frailty and our worthlessness into the potency of a divine life. Have we not longed and prayed to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect ; to be made perfect as Christ is perfect ? Behold the answer to the prayer. He makes us perfect, as He made His own Son perfect, "by the things which we suffer."

One other thing the Master designs to teach us is,

that He is the resurrection and the life. He is the resurrection for us because He himself rose. In all these things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren. In regard to death, there was no exception. He himself tasted death; the cup was very bitter, and with strong crying and tears He prayed to be delivered. His was a *young* life too, and, from the human side of the Redeemer's career, that must be taken into account. It could not make the death He was to die any easier that He died young. And yet, mingling with the bitterness and the great darkness, there was the thought that this death of His did not end all. "For the joy that was set before Him, he endured the cross, despising the shame." What is the use of the story of the cross, if it be not learned and apprehended by us? If, from its bosom, there spring not the words that make this world young again, and cause fainting hearts to revive. "I am the Resurrection and the life." When sense looks upon such an object as that which the messengers who came from the house of Jairus had but recently left, it says, "all is over and past." Let us take the Master with us, and stand by the quiet stillness of death, and the words we hear are these, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die;" or these, "Why make you this ado and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." It is not death; it is RELEASE.

V A L E.

“You now must hear my voice no more,
My Father calls me home ;
But soon from Heaven the Holy Ghost,
Your Comforter shall come.

“That Heavenly Teacher, sent from God,
Shall your whole soul inspire ;
Your mind shall fill with sacred truth,
Your hearts with sacred fire.”

ACTS xx. 32.—“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

It is difficult to conceive of a mind so stoical as to be unmoved by the parting which is described in the close of this chapter. At any time, indeed, and under any circumstances, partings have in them much of sadness. Human life is so uncertain, and the changes which are taking place are so numerous, that, let your return be after ever so brief an interval, you can never promise yourself that you will find things exactly as you left them. The strong probability is, that after a few years matters will so be changed that some of the friends with whom we have taken farewell, will never again, on this side of the

eternal world, hear our voice, till we are changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and the body of our humiliation is fashioned after the likeness of the glorious body of our risen Lord. In the case referred to in the text, it was so, for he with whom the elders of the Ephesian Church had come to confer at Miletus could say, "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more."

There are two points which fall to be considered in connection with the words of Paul—THE BUILDERS and THEIR WORK.

I. *The great builder up of the Church is God—*
"*I commend you to God.*" It had come down as an article of faith from the old Hebrew Church, that Jehovah exercises over and towards His Church the most watchful and benignant care; that her welfare, her prosperity, her increase, her usefulness, all depend upon Him. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman watcheth but in vain." "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." There was none other to whom Paul could with equal confidence have left the care of the Church, from whose members he was then removing. For this great Jehovah had, in sovereign love and wisdom, founded the Church—He had laid its foundations upon the hills of holiness. His own sure decree, His divine perfections, His oath and covenant, the

incarnation of His well-beloved Son—such are the holy mountains, the perpetual hills whose summits are crowned by the city of the Great King ; such the foundations on which rests the Church of the living God. Hence it is a city which cannot be moved. Century on century has come and gone, and has left all untouched these sacred foundations. While other cities and other kingdoms have been shaken to their centre, this, whose founder is God, remains. Looking on it, walking about it, marking its bulwarks, considering its palaces, meditation finds words for itself, and the words are words of jubilee and of triumph,—“ This God is our God for ever and ever : He will be our guide even unto death.”

The purpose of God, however, contemplates more than the mere laying of the foundation. It looks, also, to the rearing of a glorious superstructure. There is nothing which so much convicts the architect of folly or of impotence, as an edifice in which all progress is arrested, and the building left half finished. Any one, however, who realises, as Paul did, the fixedness of the purpose of the Eternal, who knows and feels that the God who has begun a good work will carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus, will have no difficulty in perceiving why he commended this Ephesian Church to God. The apostle knew that the work must be carried on amidst great opposition ; that kings and princes, and the mighty of the earth, would band themselves against it ; that the unholy passions of men would surge in mad, angry

tide against the edifice. He knew, on the other hand, that God was mightier than all, and that the power which He had so signally displayed in laying the foundation, would be continued in the progress of the building. But as stone after stone is added to it, and the living temple rises higher and higher, he feels there is always the more need to commend it to God. More so, if possible, when times of trial and of difficulty are at hand, for then the weakness of man, and the power of God come out in stronger relief.

This great Builder works by means of a certain instrumentality, by THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, that is, the Gospel of His own dear Son; and to that Gospel the apostle commends the Church which he is leaving. There is observable in all the titles by which Paul speaks of the Gospel, a beautiful felicity; nor does that which occurs in this text differ from the rest—THE WORDS OF GOD'S GRACE. The revelation of God's character as presented in other departments of His working, are of a different stamp from that presented in the Gospel of His Son. In nature, we are called on to admire the evidences of His power, of His wisdom, of His beneficence. We hear in the deep-toned thunder, the distant echoings of that awful majesty before which holy angels veil their faces: we see in the beauty of this material universe the reflection of the supreme beauty and loveliness of Him who has made all things. In providence, we mark the infinite wisdom which has known the

end from the beginning, and which out of seeming evil is still educing good. But in this glorious Gospel of the blessed God, it is, above all things, HIS GRACE which arrests the thoughts and rivets the attention of the sons of men. Free, undeserved favour to creatures who are exposed, through sin, to His wrath and curse—what a thought that is! I do not wonder that the angels of God desire to look into it, for there never was given to angel or to man such marvellous proof of grace as this. God manifests to His holy angels, and to all holy creatures, love; but grace involves love shown to the undeserving, pardon to the rebel, forgiveness to the offender. It is the act of a sovereign pardoning the rebellion of unworthy, ungrateful subjects, and reinstating them in his favour. And, at the same time, it is grace flowing in a channel which is more glorifying to all the other perfections of God, than if He had caused every member of the rebel race to perish; for it flows to man, through the pierced hands and feet, through the riven side, of the Lamb of God. It is grace coming to us through Gethsemane, borne to us by the cross of Calvary, and therefore it is the supreme proof of love, and of willingness to pardon. If men did but know it, this grace of God is the most marvellous thing that the world has ever seen. The wonders of that firmament above us, with its vast systems, with its countless worlds revolving in space; the wonders of earth, ranging from the vast

and terrible to the minutely small and beautiful, are as nothing when set over against the word of God's grace. The incarnation, the suffering, the agony, the death of the Son of God—there is a marvel in each of these which the loftiest intellect on earth cannot fathom. It can only stand awe-struck, and utter the words which a highly gifted mind uttered, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

When I contemplate the wonders which the word of God's grace has effected, and the transformations which it has caused, the feeling deepens that there is here something surpassingly grand and marvelous. See how it has arrested the profligate in his profligacy; how it has caused the drunkard to cast from him the maddening cup which was unseating reason from her throne, and to sit at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind; how the demon of violence and lust has been cast out; how it has raised men from the misery and degradation of sin, and has made them kings and priests unto God and the Father;—look at all this, and say if I am not justified in declaring that there is nothing under heaven so worthy of attentive study, and of cordial acceptance, as the word of God's grace.

If we hold this view, it will not appear surprising that Paul should commend the Ephesians not only to God, but to the word of His grace; for in their case, as in the case of so many others, this Gospel

had effected the most wondrous change. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." That Gospel which had raised them out of the mire of sin, was still the power of God unto salvation; it was through it they must look for those spiritual blessings in heavenly places by which they were to be rendered meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, and to be raised to the right hand of Jesus. The fountain from which they first drew spiritual life is to be, to the end, that from which they must drink; the grace which first gave them a place among the children—that, and that only, could build them up, and give them an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. As it was in the days of Paul, so is it at this moment. There is nothing like the word of God's grace for building up the Church of Christ. Any good which a preacher of the Word can effect, is simply by the word of God's grace. Were it given him to see the results of each sermon which he has preached, he should find, beyond doubt, that the discourses which, more than any others, have gone to the upbuilding of the congregation, are

those which have told men most of the grace of God. It is not of God's appointing that men should be turned from sin to holiness by finely turned sentences, by sermons abounding in the attempted solution of metaphysical or psychological problems. It is by the word of His grace. The more *that* is preached in its purity, the more freely a crucified Christ is offered to perishing sinners, so much the more the edification of the Church is advanced, and sinners brought into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. I have always reckoned it chief among the features of congregational life that the true members of the Church manifest no longings after novelties in doctrine; that they do not crave anything approaching to the sensational in sermons; but that they should seem to be most satisfied, and profess to be most benefited, by the simple declaration of that Gospel, whose crowning tidings of great joy are, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

II. We shall now consider the work which God and his word can effect.

They are able "to build you up." The question has been raised, to which of the two antecedents the relative "which" in the text applies. The construction of the sentence in the original text shows that it is not the word "grace;" it may be, however, so far as the construction goes, the expression, "the word of His grace." It has been suggested that the

antecedent lies further back, and that it is "God" to whom the apostle refers: so that the sentence might very well be read, emphasising the word *His*, "I commend you to God, and to the word of *His* grace, *who* is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Such an arrangement of the sentence would have the effect of referring to the Great Supreme the last of those two results mentioned in the text, although I cannot perceive any objection to including the agent and the instrument (God and His Gospel) in one, and viewing them as co-operating in producing the end here spoken of.

This "building up" of the Church is a work at once *great* and *arduous*. *Great*, inasmuch as without it, nothing permanently good is to be accomplished. I shall suppose that some stately edifice is to be erected, and that all the stones of which it is to be composed are brought from the quarry and laid upon the site which has been chosen. That would only be one step towards the completion of the architect's plan—the first step, no doubt, but unless something more should be effected, there would be no edifice. The stones must be built up, stone laid upon stone, and all firmly compacted. Whenever men are so moved as to cry, "What shall we do?" let it be permanently understood that anything valuable which comes ultimately out of such a movement, came not through the excitement of the time, but out of the patient, steady, building-

up-work which has been going on in all the congregations around. Men come to know their Bible better, and to understand more clearly the doctrines of Divine grace, as well as to realise the need for a holy, consistent life. All true profit which the Church has enjoyed, has been through the process which Paul here describes. There is no work on earth to be compared with the building up of the Church of God. Consider the grandeur of the subject operated upon—the soul of man. It is not dead, motionless matter, it is *living* stones; stones that can be moved to tears or smiles, to agony, or to intensest joy; stones that can, themselves, in turn, employ whatever energy is in them in this grand and glorious work of building up others; living stones that are destined yet to sing in the heavenly temple the song of Moses and the Lamb.

There are two kinds of joy which the Christian ministry is permitted to feel, and it would be difficult to say which is the greater; either, forms the very purest happiness which a human heart can experience. The one is, when, by the word of God's grace, souls that are on the downward path are rescued from the tyranny and degradation of sin, and brought into the Church of God. The other, when the consciousness exists that they who are already *in* the Church are being built up in the faith. The joy will largely depend upon the kind of work for which a man feels he has the greatest adaptation. The disciple, for instance, who

leaned at supper upon the bosom of Jesus, must have been one who looked upon "building up" as a most important thing; for once and again in his letters he refers to this point. "I rejoiced greatly," he says, "that I found thy children walking in truth;" and, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." This "walking in the truth," is simply another way of expressing the idea of the text; for there is no surer evidence of a congregation being built up, than that the members of it walk in the truth, and make progress in the knowledge of it. Looking back upon a ministry of nearly thirty years, I venture to think that any little work I have been enabled to do for Christ, has been in this direction, rather than in the other.

If the work be *great*, it is also *arduous*. It falls in with the course of human experience that almost every great work is arduous. Whatever is very easily accomplished, is, for the most part, of very trifling value. This holds good in the Church no less than in the world; for, if there are few greater works than this of building up, there are few more difficult. In the natural world, men in rearing an edifice have to deal with material that is passive in their hands, yielding itself up to be hewn and shaped as they please; but it is altogether different in the Church of Christ. The material to be operated upon there, has a will and a way of its own; has to encounter a thousand different elements and forces which tend to thwart the Builder's purpose;

and sometimes, when you imagine that you have succeeded in fixing a stone firmly in its place, and that it will grow up rapidly into the full stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, you find that some one or other of these unhappy influences comes in and throws back the work to such an extent that it has to be done over again. In truth, this building up is such hard work, that unless a man knew and felt assured that he has God with him, he might, after many disappointments, and many trials, feel inclined to give it up, and say with Jeremiah, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name." But the God who strengthened Jeremiah can still strengthen the builders and the workers in His Church, and out of the ruins of humanity can raise up to Himself an holy temple, in which the song which is old, but ever new, shall ascend unceasingly—"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

God, and the word of His grace, can give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. The relations between a minister and his people must have been very different from what they ought to be, if he cannot with all his heart say, "May God grant them this!" "An inheritance among all them that are sanctified." What a boundless prospect that opens up! What is the inheritance that pertains to the holy ones? Is it not God, the living God? "The Lord is the portion of mine inherit-

ance, and of my cup." "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God : and if children, then heirs ; HEIRS OF GOD, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." To have God as one's own ! That makes us mightier than the crowned monarch ; that gives us everything we need ; that raises us above all care and sorrow and trial, and brings us into the heavenly kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Next to that happiness, is the joy of knowing that God is able and willing to give us this blood-bought inheritance ; that the poorest among us can have it for the asking, and, that once ours, neither man nor devil, neither earth nor hell, can take it from us. It is an inheritance "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." But in order to have it, and in order to enjoy it, we must be *sanctified*. This inheritance belongs to the holy alone ; therefore, our hearts must be purified by the shed blood of Jesus—our souls must be created anew in Christ, and our lives must be Christ-like lives. Is it not a glorious thing that we should look forward to standing in our lot, at the end of the days, among all them that are sanctified ? Ourselves holy, and mingling with the holy, and all of us together looking up to the holy Christ, and walking with Him in white.

AQUILAE ASCENDENTES.

“At break of day, as heavenward
The pious monks of Saint Bernard
Uttered the oft-repeated prayer,
A voice cried through the startled air,
Excelsior !

“A traveller, by the faithful hound,
Half-buried in the snow was found,
Still grasping in his hand of ice
That banner with the strange device,
Excelsior !

“There in the twilight, cold and grey,
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,
And from the sky, serene and far,
A voice fell, like a falling star,
Excelsior !

LONGFELLOW.

ISAIAH xl. 31.—“They shall mount up with wings as eagles.”

AMONG the recollections of my earlier days, I can look back upon frequent visits paid, along with young companions, to an outhouse, in which was confined a full-grown eagle, which had been captured somewhere in the Western Highlands of Scotland. Even then, I remember how the thought oppressed me, of the hard fate of this king of the feathered tribe, born for liberty, and yet imprisoned

within the poor, dingy walls into which the light gained access only through the iron bars which held him in. Even there, however, amidst the squalid surroundings, and the dejected aspect of the bird, I can recollect, there was one feature which always impressed us,—the large, full-orbed eye, in which sparkled the gleam, as of hidden rays of the sun lying far back, and shooting out their longings for a freedom which never came, and for one, but one, circling flight into the blue above; for one, but one, delightful bathing in the unclouded forthshining of the lord of day. It did not occur to ~~me~~ then, though it has often since been before my mind, that I was looking upon what was a striking emblem of a Christian life, in which the earthly and the carnal, fetters, and restrains the higher impulses which spring out of the renewed soul's relationship to God through Jesus Christ. The new life is meant to soar, it rises naturally closer and nearer to the source of its being, and never attains its full development till it basks in the unclouded rays of the sun of righteousness. But, alas! how often it presents the aspect of the imprisoned eagle, shut in by the walls of unbelief; kept close to earth, when it should soar into the blue of heaven. Ever and anon, as the breezes of a purer atmosphere pass the prison walls, and steal in through the prison grating, the eye brightens, and shoots forth longing glances towards what should be, and what shall yet be,—the perfect liberty of the sons of God. The sigh of the weary

heart, burdened by its distance from heaven, rises into the ear of the God of Sabaoth,

“Nearer to thee, my God, nearer to thee.”

I feel convinced that one of the great needs of the Christian life in our own day, is to realise the fact that that life was meant by the Great Author of it to *soar*. Forgetful of this, we live for the most part upon a low, worldly level, we, who should be “mounting up with wings as eagles.” The sad thing about the fact which I have mentioned is, that when this level is reached by the Christian heart, it is always the result of a descent from the higher position, with which the Christian life has commenced. The eagle spreads out its wings, and takes its flight, not from the level of the ground on which we walk, but from the brow of some lofty mountain, from which, in circling sweep, it rises nearer and nearer to the sun. Our birth-place is not on the plain, but in the mountains, “His foundation is in the holy *mountains*.” But dragged downward by a thousand cares, burdened by a thousand anxieties, allured by a thousand temptations, we find ourselves, at length, on a lower level than that with which the new life commenced; so that, instead of springing up from the latter, as from some vantage ground, we have not unfrequently to put forth a preliminary effort to reach what should have been, and what would have been the starting point, but for the influences which have dragged us down. With the view, then, of affording encouragement

and stimulus to this aiming after a higher life, such as it appeared to the inspired son of Amos, I invite attention to the following thoughts, suggested by the words, "they shall mount up on wings as eagles."

We gain, by this means, a purer atmosphere. In all our large towns and cities, those especially devoted to manufacture and commerce, the longing grows regularly as the summer comes, to remove, for a space, from the dust, and smoke, and broiling heat which, in the midst of the ceaseless clank of the machinery, and the incessant revolutions of the wheels of commerce, make such heavy demands upon the vital force. Men are drawn towards the freshening breezes of the open moorland, towards the winds that have swept over the ocean, and that come to land freighted with health and strength for wearied human frames. The whole being cries out for a purer, clearer atmosphere, such as that which greets the soaring eagle, springing from the mountain's brow into the azure above. In like manner there is a stirring in the Christian heart, and an experience in the Christian life which bear fruit in holy aspirations, in ennobling thoughts, in ecstatic emotions, in spirit-stirring hopes. While they who mind earthly things, are being covered with the grime and dust, these others are rising from the mountain top into the holy atmosphere of communion with the Beloved of their souls. The world, that has wearied them, is left far behind, and the soul, bought by the blood of Jesus, pours into His

listening ear its longings, and its praises, and its love. The hand of faith is laid upon the portals of the palace of the Great King, and the foot of faith, lingering not on the threshold, but advancing to the inner sanctuary, is planted in the Holy Place, and the yearning heart casts itself upon the bosom of the loved One within the veil. I do not know whether any who may read these pages are in the habit of keeping by them, and sometimes perusing, the letters which they may have received from Christian friends. I frequently take down from my book-shelf the letters of an old worthy who, some two hundred and forty years ago, was wont to mount on wings as an eagle. Exiled from his dear flock in Anwoth, and under the ban of an earthly king, he soared into the lofty, pure region of a closer communion with Jesus, more than almost any man of whom I have read. And, as he soared, he sung. As he comes down from the heights on which, long years since, Moses stood, these words fall upon the heart like dew upon the tender grass, "O fairest, O highest, O loveliest One, open the well. O water the burnt and withered travellers with this love of thine. I think it is possible on earth to build a young new Jerusalem, a little new heaven of this surpassing love. God either send me more of this love, or take me quickly over the water, where I may be filled with his love. My softness can not take with want, I know not if I play foul play with Christ, but I would have a link

of that chain of His providence mended, in pining and delaying the hungry on-waiters. Yet, to say Christ is a niggard to me, I dare not; and if I say I have abundance of His love, I should lie. I am half-straitened to complain and cry, Lord Jesus, hold thy hand no longer." I have quoted this to show you how pure the atmosphere is which he reaches, who has realised that the Christian life consists in rising higher. Among the ranks of Christian men, who are they that the world takes knowledge of? They who are so exceedingly like the world, that discrimination between the world and themselves is almost impossible. The men who prefer an hour's discussion upon the commerce, the literature, the politics of the world, to an hour's sweet converse with their Father and their God? Nay, the men whom the world takes knowledge of, are the men who have been with Jesus, who say, and act, "our citizenship is in heaven, from which we look for the coming of the Lord."

We gain a juster view of things the higher we mount up. On the lower levels of the Christian life, the eye can never travel beyond the objects that immediately surround it, and even these are not seen with any great amount of clearness. The atmosphere is of that dense, hazy kind which presents objects, that ought to be familiar, in so strangely distorted a shape, that they can with difficulty be recognised. And, besides, life is so hemmed in by the mountains that rise on all sides,

that even were the atmosphere as clear as it is hazy, the range of the vision is necessarily circumscribed. Let us see how this bears upon events of every-day occurrence in the experience of the Christian. Down on the lower level, there is seen, one day, a dark thunder-cloud, and the jagged lightning leaps like gleaming swords in its bosom. Our heart fails us for very fear, and the lips mutter the words of distrust and perplexity, "Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? Are His mercies gone for ever?" Down in the valley, there comes upon us some sickness, which withdraws us from our employment, and which threatens to bring those whom we love, and ourselves, into closer acquaintance than ever before, with poverty, if not with want, and you say in your haste, "I am cut off from before thine eyes, I am poor and needy, and the Lord thinketh *not* upon me." Shut in by the mountains, we see men, whose life is a standing rebellion against God, laden with wealth, and spreading out like the green bay tree, and in our heart lies the unuttered treason against God, "How doth God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?" I know how all this can be brought to an end,—it is by mounting up. We must get to the mountain top; we must rise higher even than that; we must make it the point from which, stretching out the wings of our faith, we shall get into the clear open of the sky above, and from that loftier elevation, everything that was dark and bewildering

is lit up with the loving smile of God, and in His light you clearly see light. The cloud, surveyed from a point beyond its upper side, becomes, through the forth-shining of the sun of righteousness, like a great hyaline sea, its judgment-like aspect has passed away, and, poised upon the wings of faith, we say, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever." And even the sickness which, down in the valley, seemed so dark and lowering, becomes, from the lofty altitude, as the very gate of heaven. We are troubled no more at the prosperity of the wicked, but sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints."

If, instead of contemplating the effect which our living upon the higher levels of the Christian life has, in reference to our own trials, and the crosses which we are called to bear, we regard it in reference to the progress of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we shall find the same truth hold good. To the Christian, who is much occupied with the world, and with its many engagements, the advancement of the Gospel is not a matter of much moment. If he thinks of it at all, he regards it as a struggling cause, which, after long centuries of conflict, *may* possibly effect a revolution upon the habits and feelings of the nations of the earth. The prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will

be done on earth, even as it is in heaven," comes from his lips, not so much as being the cry of a strong faith, as it is the expression of a lingering fear and doubt. How different it seems to him who has mounted up as on eagle's wing! He has got so much nearer to the Omnipotence of God; he is pressing closer to His infinite love, and, as he sees the fountain of that love streaming from the throne of God, and of the Lamb, he feels certain that it will flow on and on, till it embraces all kindreds of the nations. He looks east, and he sees the inhabitants of India, and of China and Japan flocking as doves to their windows. His eye rests upon the scattered tribes of Israel, and he beholds them clinging to the Cross, round which their fathers gathered, as they said, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles bring presents, the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts; yea, all kings fall down before Him, and all nations serve Him." This is one of those things which demand of a man, that he shall not only be *in* the Spirit, but be *filled* with the Spirit before he can behold it. It is, perhaps, one of the loftiest attainments of the Christian life. At the opening of the Book of Revelation, John says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day;" but when the glorious consummation of God's great purpose of love to fallen man is to be made known, what takes place? One of the seven angels says to him, "Come hither and I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." "And

he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." From no ordinary mountain does he behold it: it is a great and high mountain, towering far above earth, and touching, with its summit, the heaven from which the Bride descends for the marriage feast of her Lord who died for her. Let us strive to reach the blissful heights from which we see what the world cannot see. All, to an eye trained to look upward to the sun, will appear full of a certain divine order, and wisdom.

The higher one mounts, so much the easier is it to *hear the voice of God in the blessed calm and quiet which pervade the higher regions of the Christian life.* When a friend desires to make to us some confidential communication, he does not select, for that purpose, the noisy streets, or the rapid whirl of business hours: he draws us aside, and we willingly follow. Our best and dearest Friend has many things to say to us which cannot be heard on the lower level of life, in which we are so frequently passing our time. To hear His words, we must mount on wings as eagles. The roar of the city's life, the clang of hammers, the sound of machinery in motion, must lie far beneath us, and, in the deep stillness that reigns all around, the faintest whisper of the loving voice may be heard, and the very

pulsings of the heart of Him who loved us with a love so great, that He died for us. And, O the glorious things which He has to tell us of! Of comfort in sorrow; of support in trial; of a loving hand that wipes away the tears; of a loving heart that sympathises in all our afflictions, and that does not disdain to call us "brethren." Life in God, appears as it never did appear, and never could have appeared in the midst of the world's entanglements. The poor caged eagle lives, to be sure; it breathes, it moves so far as its prison-walls will permit, but soaring into the blue vault of heaven, drinking in with glowing, kindling eye, the bright rays of the sun—that is true life to it. And so it is with us, when we succeed in casting off the clogging weights that keep us close to earth. We do *then* truly live, and the voice and word of Him who is life, and light and love thrill our inmost heart. "Come up hither," he says, "and I will show thee the Church's Bridegroom. I will tell thee by my Spirit of His glory, of His ever-proceeding work of intercession; how He pleads for His bride within the veil; how the arm of His power encircles her, and the glory of His wisdom guides her. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; He will shew them His covenant."

The higher we mount, so much the more have we of the unclouded sunshine. You have, I daresay, made use again and again of the phrase, "the sun is not shining in his strength to-day." And so it seems to

us who are here on earth, but the truth is, that the sun is *always* shining, either on this side of the globe, or on the other. It is not that the sun does not shine, but that the clouds and the mist, and the gathering darkness intercept and obscure his bright rays. If we could rise above the clouds, we should, for ourselves, perceive that it is so. What cannot be in the natural, is possible for us in the spiritual world. Were we living in heart and soul *above* the clouds, we should find that the sun of righteousness *always* shines. What is the "fulness of joy" that Jesus presses upon his disciples before he takes his departure to the nightless land? Is it not the unclouded sunshine? What is that perfect love of which John speaks once and again? What is that being "filled with all the fulness of God," for which Paul instructed the Ephesians to pray? They are nothing but the mounting up on wings as eagles, the ceaseless pressing closer to the spring of our spiritual life, and drinking in at every pore of our being the light and the love that are in Him. Happy is the heart that lives above the clouds, and basks in the forthshining of the countenance of God!

It may be said, that this discourse is addressed to, or rather that it describes the feelings and experiences of a favoured few. I trust not, and declare that this mounting on wings as eagles is not impossible. I have not been speaking of a mere peradventure: I have been speaking of a gracious promise of that

God who cannot lie. Was He a truth-speaking God when He said, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." If so, it is the same God who says, "they that wait upon the Lord shall mount up with wings as eagles." We are living altogether below the high privilege of the Christian life, if we know not the meaning of these words, and if we have not, to some extent, experienced their truth. Nor, is it an experience that pertains only to those of a highly poetic, and excitable cast of mind. It is said to belong to them "that wait upon the Lord." As shewing that the most philosophical cast of mind knows what it means, no less than the most impressionable, I shall reproduce here a sentence or two from the experience of one whose name stands out as perhaps the most philosophic and deep of all our Christian divines—Jonathan Edwards, the author of the "Freedom of the Will." "Sometimes," he says, "only mentioning a single word, causes my heart to burn within me, or only seeing the name of Christ, or the name of some attribute of God. Once as I rode out into the woods, having alighted from my horse in a retired place for divine contemplation, I had a view that, for me, was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God, as Mediator between God and man, and His wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension. The grace that appeared so calm and sweet, appeared also great above the heavens. The person of Christ

appeared ineffably excellent, with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception, which continued, as near as I can judge, about an hour. I felt an ardency of soul to be—what I know not otherwise how to express—emptied and annihilated; to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone; to love Him with a pure and holy love; to trust in Him, to live upon Him, to serve and follow Him, and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity.” Here is a paradox for you—“To lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone,” and yet to “mount up with wings as eagles.” They that wait upon the Lord, and they alone, know the meaning of it.

“PASCE AGNOS MEOS.”

A shepherd was mourning over the death of his favourite child, and, in the passionate and rebellious feelings of his heart, was bitterly complaining that what he loved most tenderly, and was in itself most lovely, had been taken from him. Suddenly a stranger of grave and venerable appearance stood before him, and beckoned him forth into the field. It was night, and not a word was spoken till they arrived at the fold, when the stranger thus addressed him: “When you select one of these lambs from the flock, you choose the best and most beautiful among them. Why should you murmur because I, the Good Shepherd of the sheep, have selected from those which you have nourished for me the one that was most fitted for my eternal fold?” The mysterious stranger was seen no more, and the father’s heart was comforted.

II. TIM. ii. 3.—“Good soldiers of Jesus Christ.”

PASSING along the beautiful ‘Meadows’ the other day, I came upon a group of merry children playing at soldiers. One with a whistle; another, with what had been the hoop of a barrel, but now straightened out, and the rust rubbed off; a third, with his handkerchief fluttering in the wind, and a fourth, who had succeeded in becoming master of a gay feather, and who was marching on very much as does the bird to which the feather originally belonged. I cannot

say that the discipline was very strict, or that the troops were very warlike, or very well dressed, but none the less there were brave little hearts beating under their jackets, and I could not help praying that the arm which held the straightened hoop, might yet wield a mightier blade, and strike lusty blows for the good, and the true; and that the bandmaster of the forces, who was just at that moment making somewhat discordant, not to say hideous music, might one day place to his lips a silver trumpet, which should make glad echoes float over mountain and vale, and cause men to listen to the sweetest music that earth has ever heard; and that the bearer of the tiny flag, might yet advance a nobler standard, on which should be written in letters of gold, "Liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

I wish to speak to you, for a little, not about *playing* at soldiers, but about being soldiers *in earnest*. The person to whom the words of my text were sent in a letter, had, not long before the letter reached him, become a soldier, and the old warrior who wrote to him, wished him to understand, that in joining his regiment, he was not to find it child's play, but sober earnest, that hard blows would be going, and that he must never, never dream of putting off his armour till the Commander-in-Chief should send him his discharge, and say, "Well done." Therefore it is, that Paul says in his letter, "Thou, therefore, endure hardness as

a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Paul himself had served under the flag, and had had his own share of hard fighting, but he kept a brave heart within him, and, one night, when they had cast him into jail, and made his feet fast in the stocks; when his back was torn, and bleeding with the lashes which they had rained upon him, in a town called Philippi, he, and his fellow soldier, Silas, struck up a Psalm, just to cheer their own hearts, and to show that they had not lost confidence in their Commander, who saw them, and was coming to their help.

It is time, now, that I were speaking to you about this *Commander*. The text will tell you who He is—"a good soldier of *Jesus Christ*." Jesus, I may tell you, is not very often spoken of as a soldier. He is more frequently spoken of as a servant, as God's servant, but He is presented to us in the Bible as a soldier also. Here are some of the names which He bears in this character, "the Captain of the Lord's host," "a Commander and Leader of the people," "the Captain of our salvation." It is of very great consequence that a commander should be such an one that the soldiers can look up to him. If the captain, for instance, be one who has never seen a battlefield, who has never been engaged in a battle, and who knows nothing about the enemy or his ways, not only do the soldiers not respect him, but they feel, when they go into the battle, that they have no chance of the victory, and they become cast down and dis-

couraged. But you have no cause to fear anything of this kind in the Captain, Christ Jesus. He has Himself been engaged in some desperate battles, and He has on Him the marks of one of the most fearful conflicts that the world has ever seen. One of His battles lasted for a month and ten days, and all the time He had little or no food, and His enemy said, "Now is my chance, I have Him at my mercy." No! not yet, the enemy does not know the power that is in Him. As he rushes upon Him, out flashes His bright sword with its keen edge, and stroke after stroke is dealt with it, till His enemy turns his back and flees, conquered by the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. That, too, was a desperate battle near Jerusalem. Sometimes I have heard of you boys fighting with one hand tied, but your Captain, and mine, fought with both hands, not tied, but nailed to a beam of wood, and yet He conquered, and conquered in dying. An old Greek commander, just about the middle of the battle, as he was urging on his men, received a deadly wound from a javeline that stuck in his breast. They carried him to the rear, and his physician looking at him, and examining the wound, told him that to draw out the javeline would be instant death. Though suffering excruciating pain, he said, "Let it remain, that I may, before passing away, hear whether my soldiers have won the battle. In an hour after, a great shout fell upon the ear of the dying warrior. Listening intently, he whispered to

the soldier that bent over him, "I know it; I know it is the victory shout of the Thebans; now, draw out the javeline, I die content." This was a captain who in dying conquered, but a stranger thing than this happened on Calvary—your Captain and mine conquered *by* dying. The great enemy never received such a blow, as when Jesus bowed His head and said, "It is finished." Well, boys, what think ye of Christ? Have you confidence in Him? do you admire, do you love Him? Are you ready to say, "We will follow Him wherever He goes; through fire, and through water we will follow Him; in fair weather and foul, we shall follow Him; assured that with a leader such as this, we cannot fail to win the day."

Shall I tell you of the wonderful care which He takes of His soldiers? He sees to it that they have fitting armour, not only for attacking the enemy, but for protection to themselves during the battle; helmet, breast-plate, shield, all are of His providing. I met, for instance, a soldier of His the other day, who had at one time been in the ranks of the enemy, but who had partly come, and had partly been brought over to the side of the Great Captain. He had, during the days of his opposition to Jesus, acquired a habit which a good many of the enemies of Jesus manage to acquire,—he had, in fact, been greatly addicted to the use of what you, as Band of Hope boys and girls, are solemnly banded against. He has frequent assaults from his old enemy to sustain;

and sometimes the effort to resist amounts almost to an agony. He tells me that when the worst comes to the worst, he has no help for it, but to march straight up to the Captain, and tell Him how it stands with him, and ask Him to stand by his side, and help him in the conflict, and he assures me that whenever he asked his Commander to do him this great kindness, the Commander has never once refused. One day, [when he was just about to be overcome by the enemy, he fell upon his knees, and looking up expected an answer, and the answer came; he heard the voice of Jesus say, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be thou not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness!" and he rose up, strong as a giant, and the armies of the aliens fled before him.

What rich store of provision for the march, and for the battle He makes for His soldiers! And how tenderly He cares for them, and nurses them when they happen to be wounded. I have never heard of our Commander leaving His soldiers in the hand of the enemy. Never have I known of a case in which Jesus deserted a dying soldier. Over against the name of one of the great warriors who lived at the beginning of this century, there stands a deed of shame which will never be forgotten; a deed which all the glory won in the field and in the cabinet can never efface from the page of his history. This Commander had invaded Egypt, and was, at length,

compelled to retreat, through the bravery of a British army and its general. His sick and wounded had accumulated in an hospital from which he had no means of removing them, except by a long delay, which might have led to his own capture, and that of his army. What was to be done? You with your young, generous hearts would say, "Why! there was but the *one* thing to be done. These men had fought for him, and many of them were dying in his cause, let him stand by them, come what will—let him stand by them to the last," But no; a hurried consultation took place with a physician as to the speediest means of poisoning them, poisoning these brave men, while he, and his remaining soldiers hurried home to France. I sometimes wonder if on that stormy winter night, when the soul of Napoleon I. passed away into eternity, and when he seemed to be dreaming of his old battles, and the words *tête d'armée* rang out from his lips clear as a clarion's note,—I sometimes wonder, if the ghostly forms of these poor soldiers of his, whom he doomed to death in the hospital of Jaffa, did not crowd round his dying bed, and upbraid him with his neglect of the first duty which a general owes to his troops. How different it is with the Captain of our salvation! *His* first care is for *His* soldiers. So much does He care for them, so deeply does He love them, that rather than they should die, He Himself laid down His life for them; and, having been raised from the dead by the power of God, He now lives for them,

and guarantees their life by His own. There is not a single hour of all the day that He is not thinking of them, planning what will be for their comfort, how to shield them, how to help them, and to crown them at last with glory.

I shall just mention one other thing connected with our Commander, that is, *His intimate and personal knowledge of all His soldiers*. I was present, not long since, at the review of a large body of troops. The general in command was riding up and down in front of the long line. I could not help wondering how many of all the soldiers were known to him by name. Did he know the battles in which they had fought? Did he know anything of the homes in which they had been brought up? I suspect he knew very little as to any of these points. But He of whom I have been speaking, knows every soldier in the army. He knows the old soldiers, who have borne the burden and the heat of the day, and who have on them the scars of many a wound. He knows also the young recruits, knows all their history, knows them by name, and knows, besides, every good resolution which they have ever formed to be valiant for the truth, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world. He not only knows at the time, but He remembers for *all* time, every valiant and heroic deed which they have performed. If there be a boy or girl here who has suffered in defence of the cause of temperance, who has endured reproach, and violence and wrong, rather than

violate the promise which they have made, He will never forget the brave one, all through the thousands and thousands of years that must pass before the Grand Review takes place. He will hold it in remembrance; and, when all the troops are assembled before His Father and Himself, He will call him by name, and confess, and reward him.

But what about *you* as soldiers? You may be thinking I am never coming to that. But the Commander, you ought to know, is of greater consequence than the soldier, and, therefore, I have dwelt so long upon His wondrous character. Now, however, about yourselves; for you form, I assure you, an important section of the army of the Lord.

1. *A "good soldier" is always a brave soldier.*—There are, of course, various kinds of bravery. That was a brave young lad who, bearing the flag of the regiment, and being sorely wounded, even unto death, wrapped it round him, and lay on the battlefield with the flag for his winding sheet. That, too, was a brave little soldier who, during the Indian mutiny, having been taken prisoner by a band of mutineers, was tortured in a most terrible manner in order to get him to curse the name of Jesus, his Captain. Every cruel cut and blow made him but cry the louder, "I cannot curse Jesus Christ; I will not, I dare not curse Jesus Christ," till, at last, faintly murmuring the words, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," he fell on sleep. He, too, was a brave old soldier who, sitting at the mess-

table next to a younger officer of hot temper, who had taken too much wine, (and to some people one drop is too much), was surprised, in the heat of an argument, by finding his young mess-mate dash a glass of wine in his face. It was such an insult, that in a moment a death-like stillness reigned at the table, each one expecting to see the veteran draw his sword, and make short work of the half-intoxicated fool. Rising to his feet, and placing his hand upon the hilt of his sword, he merely looked at him, and said, "Young man, if I could as easily wipe the stain of your blood from my soul, as I can wipe this wine from my countenance, you would not live for half an hour." Need I say, that you, as good soldiers of Christ, and very specially as good soldiers in this cause, which is very dear to Christ, will need all your bravery. You must acquire the holy art of saying "No" to *all* temptation, and particularly to the temptation which you will meet at every hand, of indulging in strong drink. Woe be to you, if, moved in after life by the gibes of foolish workmates, if tempted under the specious pretexts of good-fellowship and mirth, you, like cowards, say, "Yes," when you should say "No," a thousand times "no!" *He* is the bravest of the brave who has no fear, save the one fear—the fear of displeasing his Captain. Have you read about the young Hebrew lad, who was living in the land of the stranger, far away from his father's tents, and who, when the commission of a great sin was urged upon him, had

the manliness and the courage to say, "How *can* I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" That I hold to be true bravery. He did not fear the anger of the person who tempted him; he did not fear the prison into which he was cast; he feared God, and therefore he feared no one else. What a scene it must have been when, on the plains of Doura, the great idol of gold was set up, and trumpets were sounded, and drums were beat, and out of all the vast host, three young men were seen standing erect, while all the rest were down upon their knees, or grovelling in the dust, because the king had said it. It requires, I can tell you, a brave man to dare to be singular in this Christ-hating world. But *they* were brave, and rather than call that lump of yellow gold a god, they preferred to perish amidst the flames of the fiery furnace, heated seven times hotter than its wont was. Did I not say that the Captain knows all about His soldiers? He saw what was going on, and came down to the plains of Doura, and placed Himself side by side with His three youthful champions; and lo, in the midst of the furnace was one like unto the Son of Man, and when the three came out, there was not a hair of their head singed, nor had the smell of fire passed upon their garments! In fact, the cords which bound them were the only things which the flames *did* touch, and the king, idolater though he was, was yet compelled to say, "There is no other God who can deliver after this sort."

2. *Obedient to orders.*—It would never do for a soldier to take the giving of orders out of the hand of the captain, and to imagine that he knew better than his commander. There *must* be discipline, and strict discipline, too, otherwise there can be no success in war. Even when the orders have been given to ride on to certain death, such is the indomitable courage and obedience of British soldiers, that they do not pause to reason and argue with their chief, but they either do the thing that is ordered, or they perish in the doing of it. You know the “Charge of the Light Brigade;” if so, you will recollect the lines in it—

“Forward! the Light Brigade!
Was there a man dismay’d?
Not tho’ the soldier knew
Some one had blundered.
Their’s not to make reply,
Their’s not to reason why,
Their’s but to do and die:
Into the valley of death
Rode the Six Hundred.

“When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made.
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble Six Hundred!”

Why honour them? Not because of the wisdom of the charge, for the French general who looked on with astonished eyes was right in saying, “C’est

magnifique, mais ce n' est pas la guerre,"—(It is magnificent, but it is not war). In fact, it was men sent on to death without a cause; it was a blunder, but the honour came from this, that they obeyed orders. A soldier, who was in the charge, and who was afterwards in India, told me that when they rode at the brave Russian squares, their swords sent back the rays of the sun, as if in proud disdain; when they rode back, their swords, though the sun was shining even more brightly than before, were dull with blood, and the sparkle was gone out of them utterly. My dear children, I can, without reserve, without making any, the least exception, instruct you to obey your General in *all* things; not in one thing only, but in everything. If you wish to get into trouble, I can tell you how: disobey the Captain; set up for yourselves; begin to believe that you know better than Jesus, and you will not be long in getting into trouble. Just see how it fared, in this respect, with a soldier who *would* have his own way. He got his orders one day to go to a city, the population of which was three times that of Edinburgh, to go all alone, and to proclaim, as a herald, the judgment of God. Now, I grant you, it was no easy task this, it required one like those in the Light Brigade—

“His not to make reply,
His not to reason why,
His but to do and die.”

Losing heart, the next thing was, that he lost his head too, and was foolish enough to suppose that he could flee from the presence of God. You know how vain was the effort, and how, after all his wanderings, and grumblings, and peevishness, he had just to come back to the point from which he started, and that was simply to obey orders. I have had in my hand an instruction book which the German soldiers, during the late war with France, carried in their knapsacks, and I was highly pleased to find some beautiful prayers at the close of the little book, which the soldier was recommended to use before going into battle. Now, your Commander furnishes each of you with an instruction book; and there you find Him speaking to you, His soldiers, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, etc." "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." "Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." These, and a thousand others are his instructions to you. Keep them ever in mind, for you cannot otherwise be "good soldiers" of Jesus Christ.

A good soldier is always ready and willing to help.

his fellow soldiers.—Men who are truly brave, are always unselfish and generous. They cannot bear to see any in their regiment lying wounded on the battle-field, and pass by like the priest, or like the Levite on the other side. Many years ago, I had, in a class to which I taught Latin and Greek, a boy who gave me great satisfaction from the regular and conscientious way in which he prepared his lessons. We were in the play-ground one day engaged at a game of cricket. The ball happened to strike one of the lesser boys upon the knee, causing him no small amount of pain, although the manly little fellow never uttered a cry. I could mark how all the other boys went on with the game, just as if nothing had happened. But this playmate ran up to the little fellow, and consoled him, and made much of him. Well, judge of my delight when I found that a few years ago this same pupil of mine had received from our gracious sovereign, the Queen, the Victoria Cross, for having, in the face of the enemy in India, carried from off the field, two wounded and helpless soldiers, one an officer, the other, a man belonging to the ranks. The ping, ping of the rifle balls was heard all round him, and yet the brave man hazarded his own life to save the life of others. You cannot be surprised that when I read the account of his bravery, I thought of the play-ground years ago, and how the child is father of the man.

Now it becomes you, as good soldiers of Jesus

Christ, to do your very utmost to rescue the perishing, and to care for the dying. Around you are thousands dying on the battle-field of life; dying at the hand of an insatiable monster, who, like the grave, cries, "Give, Give." You must go forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The Church of Christ expects it of you: Christ himself expects it of you; for, when we, your seniors, quit the camp, when we lay down the weapons of our earthly warfare, who is to carry on the work, who is to rescue the perishing, if it be not you? Our beloved Queen did a good and royal thing, when she instituted the order which bears her name; but He, who leads the army of the Lord, has His Order of Merit too, which is infinitely higher than any that earth can award. Do you know the words that are round it? Shall I tell you? Here they are—"She hath done what she could!"

There is just one other thing I have to say to you in reference to the "good soldier of Jesus Christ,"—*that he never deserts his post.* I do not think any of you can have seen a once famous town which, after being buried for centuries, has been, so to speak, disinterred, and now lies open to the view of men, just as it was when the busy current of life was arrested by an awful calamity: a burning mountain which you know well by name (Vesuvius) burst suddenly into flames, and from its bowels cast into the air a burning shower of red hot ashes, while the liquid lava flowed like a torrent down the sides of

the mountain, spreading desolation and death wherever it came. Two towns were destroyed by it, and when, many hundred years after this terrible event, one of them was disentombed, they found near the gate of the city, what seemed, at first sight, like a huge, badly finished statue. On further investigation, they found encased within it, the skeleton of a Roman soldier, who, during the eruption of the burning mountain, had not flinched nor moved one step from his post. What a high sense of duty and of discipline he must have had! I wish *you* to be like this Roman sentinel, never to desert your post, but to "Hold the fort." The work which you have to do on the battlefield of Temperance, is not of a kind that will be advanced by desertion. As you grow in stature, and in wisdom, as years grow upon you, be only the more firm. Say, "I have vowed, and I cannot go back," for the Lord says, "If any man draw back, I have no pleasure in him." I know not any way of making you so firm in your resolve, as by acquiring information day by day, and week by week, as to the evil influences of the sin against which your presence here is a standing protest. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might . . . that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."



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